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AN ESSAY ON THE MANNERS AND GENIUS OF THE LITERARY CHARACTER.

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LONDON:

Printed for T. CADELL, Junr. and W. DAVIES.

1795.

[Entered at Stationers' Hall.]

BRITISH MUSEUM

PREFACE.

I PRESENT the Reader with an imperfect attempt on an important topic. The materials deſigned for this Eſſay, with others, have been accidentally deſtroyed. The following ſketches are therefore not ſo numerous as I could wiſh, and as the ſubject appears to promiſe. They claim all the indulgence of the title.

I have long conſidered, what I imagine will be readily acknowledged, that there is a ſimilarity in the characters of Men of Genius, perceivable

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to a contemplative mind, and that reflections on their character may be exemplified by a ſufficient number of facts. To ſeiſe the diſpoſitions of the Literary Character, I looked therefore into Literary Hiſtory, and my collections exceeded my hopes.

When Rouſſeau compoſed his Diſſertation on the Equality of Man, this eloquent philoſopher ſought for *facts*, on which to found his reaſonings; theſe he collected from an extenſive peruſal of voyages and accounts of remote nations. I conſidered that to form juſt reflections on Men of Genius, it was proper to collect facts from their biography, and their concatenation produced all my reflections.

The more I meditate, the more I am perſuaded that all ſpeculations are illuſory and unſatisfactory, unleſs they are eſtabliſhed on prominent facts, which are to be firſt collected before we venture to indulge metaphyſical diſquiſitions. It is an obſervation of Bolingbroke, that "abſtract or general propoſitions, "though never ſo true, appear obſcure or doubtful to us very often, "till they are explained by *examples*—when examples are pointed "out to us, there is a kind of appeal, "with which we are flattered, made "to our ſenſes, as well as our underſtandings. The inſtruction "comes then from our authority; "*we yield to fact, when we reſiſt* "*ſpeculation.*" If we compare the labours of Machiavel with thoſe of Monteſquieu, we may obſerve, that the illuſtrious Frenchman had all the delicacy, the refinement, and the ſenſibility of his nation, and his general reflections are therefore brilliant, but often fallacious, becauſe not built on the permanent baſe of experience. The crafty Florentine, verſant in the manners of Princes, with ſagacity equal to his genius, deduces all his reflections from thoſe prominent *facts* which paſſed under his eye, or which he collected from the records of inſtructive hiſtory. Lord Bacon introduced that wiſe philoſophy which is only founded on *experiments*; the ſtudy of Nature in her operations. And I believe every judicious phyſician prefers the manner of Sydenham, who derives his medical fame from the vigilant obſervation, and the continued experience of tracing the progreſs of actual caſes, in the operation of actual remedies, to that of ſome modern medical writers, who, dazzled by ſpeculative phantoms, promulge paradoxes, which, unconfirmed by facts, produce much more ſerious conſequence than literary paradoxes.*

The LITERARY CHARACTER has, in the preſent day, ſingularly degenerated in the public mind. The fineſt compoſitions appear without exciting any alarm of admiration, they are read, approved, and ſuc-

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* The Readers of "A Diſſertation on Anecdotes" will pleaſe to accept theſe obſervations, as a final ſupplement to that tract.

ceeded by others; nor is the preſence of the Author conſidered, as formerly, as conferring honour on his companions; we paſs our evenings ſometimes with poets and hiſtorians, whom it is probable will be admired by poſterity, with hardly any other ſenſation than we feel from inferior aſſociates.

The youth who has more reading than experience, and a finer imagination than a ſound logic, will often be ſurpriſed when he compares the ſplendid facts ſtored in his memory, with the ordinary circumſtances that paſs under his eye. In the hiſtory of all ages, and of all nations, he obſerves the higheſt honours paid to the Literary Character. Statues, tombs, feſtivals, and coronations, croud in glittering confuſion, while, when he condeſcends to look around him, he perceives the brilliant enchantment diſſolved, and not a veſtige remains of the feſtivals and the coronations.

Before I attempt to alledge a reaſon for a ſingular revolution in the human mind, I ſhall arrange a few ſtriking facts of the numerous honours which have been paid to the Literary Character.

I muſt not dwell on the diſtinctions beſtowed on the learned by the Greeks and the Romans; their temples, their ſtatues, their games, and fleets diſpatched to invite the Student; theſe honours were more numerous and ſplendid than thoſe of modern ages. I muſt not detail the magnificent rewards and the high veneration paid by the Perſians, the Turks, the Arabians, the Chineſe, &c. The Perſian Ferdoſi received ſacks of gold for his verſes; the Arabs have ſent ambaſſadors to congratulate poets on the ſucceſs of their works; Mahomet took off his mantle to preſent to an Author; and literature in China confers nobility. But I paſs this romantic celebrity, to throw a rapid glance on our own Europe.

Not to commence more remotely than at the thirteenth century, when Nobles, and even Kings, aſpired to literature. Authors, of courſe, were held in the higheſt eſtimation. Fauchet and Paſquier inform us, that the learned received magnificent dreſſes, * ſteeds richly caparisoned, and arms reſplendent with diamonds and gold. The Floral games at Toulouſe were eſtabliſhed; and three prizes of golden flowers were reſerved for the happy poets. It was in the fourteenth century that the Italians raiſed triumphal arches, tombs, and coronations, for diſtinguiſhed Authors. Ravenna erected a marble tomb to the memory of Dante; Certaldo a ſtatue to Boccaccio, and Petrarch was at once invited by the city of Rome and the court of France, to receive the crown of laurel. Rome was preferred, and there he was publickly crowned with ſuch magnificence of pomp, and ceremonies ſo ſplendid and numerous, that his own imagination could not have ſurpaſſed the realities of this triumph.* Taſſo died the evening of his coronation. In the fifteenth century, Sannazarius received from the Venetians for ſix verſes, ſix hundred piſtoles, and poets were kiſſed by princeſſes. Later times ſaw the phlegmatic Hollander raiſe a ſtatue to the excellent Eraſmus. Let us not omit that Charles IX. of France reſerved apartments in his palace, and even wrote a poetical epiſtle to Ronſard; and Baif received a ſilver image of Minerva from his native city. Charles V. and Francis I. in the ſixteenth century, poured honours, preferments, and gifts, on the learned of their age. Literary merit was the road to promotion, and ſeignories and abbeys, ſeats in the ſtate council, and ambaſſadorſhips were beſtowed upon the Literary Character.

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* I lament much that Dr. Burney, whoſe learning excels my praiſe, and whoſe elegance is not inferior to his learning, has treated this ſubject with great levity. He ſays, in his valuable Hiſtory of Muſic, vol. 2. p. 332, that this was a cenſureable vanity.—and that "the blame can only be laid on his *youth*, "or rather on *the practice of the times*." And he continues in a ſtrain of ridicule to cenſure theſe teſtimonies of national ſenſibility. But I obſerve, that the learned Doctor, while he ſmiles at this popular diſplay and vanity, has prefixed to his performance *his own portrait* in (what ſome may conſider) *the affected poſture* of *beating time*, painted by Reynolds, and engraved by Bartolozzi. The Doctor makes an animated appearance; but this *public exhibition* of Burney, has not leſs vanity than that of Petrarch; muſt not we apply to the Doctor his own words, and "lay the blame on his youth, or rather *on the* "*practice of the times?*"

The error of Dr. Burney, in this inſtance, proceeds from his not confeſſing that there was *no vanity* in the coronation of Petrarch; for the love of glory is ſomething very ſuperior to vanity.

Since all this is truth, yet at preſent appears much like fiction, it may be enquired if our anceſtors were wiſer than we, or we more wiſe than our anceſtors.

It is to be recollected, that before the art of printing exiſted, great Authors were like their works, very rare; learning was then only obtained by the devotion of a life. It was long after the art of multiplying works at pleaſure was diſcovered, that the people were capable of participating in the novel benefit; what Alexander feared, when he reproached Ariſtotle for rendering learning popular, has happened to modern literature; learning and talents have ceaſed to be learning and talents, by an univerſal diffuſion of books, and a continued exerciſe of the mind. Authors became numerous, but as the body of the people, till within the preſent century, was ſufficiently unenlightened, their numbers were not yet found inconvenient; and as dictionaries were not yet formed, every man was happy to ſeiſe on whatever particles of knowledge accident offered; ſo late as the middle of this century, Tranſlators were yet eſteemed, and Compilers were yet reſpected.

But ſince, with inceſſant induſtry, volumes have been multiplied, and their prices rendered them acceſſible to the loweſt artiſans, the Literary Character has gradually fallen into diſrepute. It may be urged that a ſuperior mind, long cultivated, and long exerciſed, adorned with polite, and enriched with ſolid letters, muſt ſtill retain it's pre-eminence among the inferior ranks of men; and therefore may ſtill exact the ſame reſpect from his fellow-citizens, and ſtill continue the dignity of an Author with the ſame juſt claims as in preceding ages.

I believe, however, that he who would be reverenced as an Author has only one reſource; and that is, by paying to himſelf that reverence, which will be refuſed by the multitude. The reſpect which the higher claſſes ſhew to the Literary Character, proceeds from habitual politeneſs, and not from any ſenſibility of admiration; and that this is true, appears from this circumſtance, that, ſhould the Literary Character, in return, refuſe to accommodate himſelf to their regulations, and have not the art of diſcovering what quality they expect to be remarked in themſelves, he will be ſoon forſaken; and he may ſay what Socrates did at the court of Cyprus, "what I know is "not proper for this place, and "what is proper for this place, I "know not." Men of the world are curious to have a glance at a celebrated Author, as they would be at ſome uncommon animal; he is therefore ſometimes exhibited, and ſpectators are invited. A croud of frivoliſts gaze at a Man of Letters, and catch the ſounds of his ideas, as children regard the reflections of a magic lanthorn.*

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* The obſervation of the great Eraſmus on Men of Letters, is not leſs juſt than admirable. He ſaid, that they were like the great figures in the tapeſtries of Flanders, which loſe their effect, when not ſeen at a diſtance.

Nor will the Literary Character find a happier reception among others if he exacts an obſervance of his dignity. Authors are a multitude; and it requires no inconſiderable leiſure and intelligence to adjuſt the claims of ſuch numerous candidates.

De Foe called the laſt age, the age of Projectors, and Johnſon has called the preſent, the age of Authors. But there is this difference between them; the epidemical folly of projecting in time cures itſelf, for men become weary with ruination; but writing is an interminable purſuit, and the raptures of publication have a great chance of becoming a permanent faſhion. When I reflect that every literary journal conſiſts of 50 or 60 publications, and that of theſe, 5 or 6 at leaſt are capital performances, and the greater part not contemptible, when I take the pen and attempt to calculate, by theſe given ſums, the number of volumes which the next century muſt infallibly produce, my feeble faculties wander in a perplexed ſeries, and as I loſe myſelf among billions, trillions, and quartillions, I am obliged to lay down my pen, and ſtop at infinity.

"Where all this will end, God "only knows," is the reflection of a grave hiſtorian, in concluding the Memoirs of his Age. Nature has, no doubt, provided ſome concealed remedy for this future univerſal deluge. Perhaps in the progreſs of ſcience, ſome new ſenſes may be diſ-

covered

covered in the human character, and this ſuperfluity of knowledge may be eſſential to the underſtanding. We are conſiderably indebted, doubtleſs, to the patriotic endeavours of our grocers and trunkmakers, whom I reſpect as the alchemiſts of literature; they annihilate the groſs bodies, without injuring the finer ſpirits.

We are, however, ſincerely to lament that the dignity of great Authors is at all impaired. Every kind of writers find a correſpondent kind of readers, and the illiterate have their admirers, and are of ſome uſe. But it is time that we ſhould diſtinguiſh between Authors, and ſubmit ourſelves to reſpect thoſe, from whom we acquire inſtruction, and to cheriſh thoſe, from whom we derive the moſt elegant of our amuſements.

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ADDENDA.

P. 24. IT is, perhaps, unneceſſary to remind the Reader that Cicero has written on Friendſhip and Glory—of his work on Glory, nothing has reached us but the title; yet of his numerous compoſitions, this, as a production of eloquence, promiſed to be moſt grateful to the ſtudent of taſte.

P. 141. The county of Eſſex was diſtinguiſhed by the Romans by the name of Tribonantes, and it was in this province that Seneca oppreſſed the inhabitants with the loan of immenſe ſums at an immenſe intereſt.

P. 147. I omitted to obſerve, that the impiety of Satan has actually been cenſured by Clarke. Johnſon even applauds the obſervation of our Divine. I tranſcribe that great Biographer's words. "For there are thoughts, as he (Clarke) juſtly remarks, which no obſervation of character can juſtify, becauſe no good man would willingly permit them to paſs, however tranſiently, through his own mind." Here we obſerve two of our moſt profound *thinkers*, deciding on a ſubject of *taſte*; but their edict I preſume is antipoetical. Their piety was too ponderous for the exertion of their fancy. The divinity of Clarke, and the logic of Johnſon, were alike fatal to certain delicious ſtrokes in the arts of fancy; the moſt ſubtile particles of poetical refinement eſcaped their unelaſtic organs, and fell on the ſolidity of their minds, like ſeeds ſcattered upon rocks; where they muſt periſh without germinating.

ERRATA.

The Reader is requeſted to correct the following Errata with his pen; and to excuſe ſeveral typographical errors, for which the ſevere indiſpoſition of the Author will apologize.

PAGE
18 Laſt line, for *unconnected*, read *unconcocted*.
74 L. 4, for *exciting*, read *citing*.
104 L. 3, — after *converſe*, place a *comma*.
128 Dele *
131 L. 7, from the bottom, for *Que importent*, read *Que t'importent*.
135 L. 3, from ditto, for *port*, read *part*.
142 L. 4, from ditto, for *charity* read *chaſtity*.

AN

ESSAY, &c.

CHAP. I.

Of Literary Men.

A Numerous and an important body of men, diffuſed over enlightened Europe, and claſſed under no particular profeſſion, are, during the moſt arduous period of their life, unaſſiſted and unregarded; and while often devoting themſelves to national purpoſes, are expoſed not only to poverty, the fate of the many; to calumny, the portion of the great; but to an ugly family of peculiar misfortunes. Theſe are men of letters; men whoſe particular genius often becomes that of a people; the ſovereigns of reaſon; the legiſlators of morality; the artificers of our moſt exquiſite pleaſures.

Every other body of ingenious men (whether the corporation of uſeful mechanics, or the ſociety of great artiſts) are allowed ſome common aſſociation; ſome domeſtic ſeat devoted to the genius of their profeſſion, where they are mutually enlightened and conſoled. Men of letters, in our country reſemble

'Houſeleſs wanderers,'

ſcattered and ſolitary, diſunited and languid; whoſe talents are frequently unknown to their companions, and by the inertneſs of an unhappy ſituation, often unperceived by themſelves.

It is remarkable that thoſe men in the nation who are moſt familiar with each other's conceptions, and moſt capable of reciprocal eſteem, are thoſe who are often moſt eſtranged.

CHAP. II.

Of Authors.

IT is neceſſary to diſtinguiſh between an Author, and a Writer; becauſe, the deſcriptions which I propoſe to ſketch of the ſituations to which genius is frequently expoſed, will not happen to thoſe whoſe productions are their occaſional effuſions; and who ſeldom propoſe in the puerile age, to become Authors. I ſhall conſider that no Writer, has a juſt claim to the title of Author, whoſe CHIEF EMPLOYMENT is not that of STUDY and COMPOSITION. Richardſon the novelist, and Geſſner the poet, were both printers, and this will, occaſionally, exclude them from the idea I at preſent attach to an author. Hume and Bayle, Johnſon and Voltaire, are ſtudents who aſſumed the profeſſion of authors. The occaſional productions of a man of genius are ſo many ſportive offerings laid on the altar of the Graces; the more voluminous labours of great authors, are ſo many trophies raiſed on a triumphal column.

I totally exclude from theſe ſpeculations two kinds of writers. Thoſe who diſgrace letters and humanity by an abject devotion to their private intereſts, and who like Atalanta, for the ſake of the apples of gold, loſe the glory of the race; and thoſe who intrude on the public notice without adequate talents, whoſe vanity liſtens to a few encomiaſts whoſe politeneſs is greater than their diſcernment, or who applaud loudly and cenſure in whiſpers.

If we enquire into the character of an author, we find that every claſs of men entertains a different notion of his occupations. We perceive alſo that the literary world are divided into parties; and that they are mutually unjuſt. Few are capable of honouring this character; individuals err from various motives; the public only are enlightened and juſt.

The importance of an author in ſociety, is yet ſo little known, that it is rarely apparent even to authors themſelves.

The faſhionable circle conceive an author muſt be an amuſing companion; they conſider his preſence, like the other ornaments of their tables. It implies that they are perſons of taſte.

The buſy part of mankind ſuppoſe an author to be a trader; and are only aſtoniſhed to obſerve men perſevere in an occupation ſo unprofitable.

The ſtateſman only regards a philoſophical writer as a man of dangerous ſpeculations, who, if left in ſecurity, is daring, if attacked by perſecution, is intrepid.

intrepid. One who makes him tremble in the darkneſs of his moſt ſecret councils.

The man of ſcience regards his productions with contempt, and at the moſt favourable view only as ſo many amuſing futilities. He marks his ſuperior ſucceſs with a jealous eye; and complains of a frivolous public. A geometrician can draw no deductions, and ſees nothing proved, by the fineſt verſes of a poet; an antiquary marvels that an elegant hiſtorian ſhould be preferred to a chronologer; and a metaphyſician wonders at the delight communicated by faithful repreſentations of human life, written by one whom he thinks incapable of comprehending a page of Locke.

It will ſurpriſe the young and virtuous reader, when I muſt alſo add that the character is ſometimes conſidered as a kind of diſgrace. To excel in thoſe accompliſhments which enlighten or amuſe a poliſhed people, has ceaſed to be a merit with ſome, becauſe of the numerous claimants for this honour. But it is with authors as with thoſe military fops who frequent the theatres, and aſſume with their cockade, the title of captain. Enquire, and you find that the obſtreperous gentleman has been only an enſign for a week, and often that he has no claims at all to the borrowed cockade. Thus with authors, if the pretenders are diſcerned, and the ranks diſtinguiſhed, a man will reduce the number to a very inconſiderable portion of a numerous acquaintance. Every one who prints a book is not an author; publication is the teſt of literature, and there are an infinite number of works which are printed, but which all the inventive induſtry of the author could never publiſh.

Many of that claſs of ſociety whoſe entire nights are rotations of inanity, and whoſe days are too ſhort for neceſſary repoſe, bluſh for a friend who is an author; and, as the daughter of Addiſon was taught, deſpiſe even a parent who had given to a faſhionable and unworthy woman, an illuſtrious name. Theſe are they who gaze in the ſilence of ſtupidity when an unuſual topic glides into converſation, and will pardon any ſpecies of rudeneſs, ſooner than that of good ſenſe.

Others know themſelves incapacitated to become authors, and ſicken at the recollection of their abortions. Literary attainments are depreciated, to conſole their deficiencies; as bankrupts, out of mere envy, calumniate the ſucceſsful merchant.

There is, however, a race of ingenious men, who derive their merit and their fortune from their ſtudies, and yet contemn literature and literary men. This is a paradox of the heart, of which the ſolution may appear difficult. Adrian VI. obtained the pontificate, as the reward of his learning; and men of letters, indulged the moſt golden hopes, at his acceſſion; but on the contrary, he contemned literature, and perſecuted ſtudents. A living orator, whoſe chief merit conſiſts in his literary powers, it has been ſaid, performs in the preſent day, the part of Adrian. Such men treat ſcience, as a barbarous ſon, who ſpurns at that parent, the milk of whoſe boſom nurtured him in infancy, and whoſe hand ſupported him in youth. A literary friend obſerves, that the pope feared leſt men of letters might ſhake the pontificate, and the orator, leſt they might detect the errors of his politics; an obſervation which ſhews the political influence of authors.

Thoſe to whom nature has beſtowed callous organs, and who are really inſenſible to the charms of fancy, or the force of reaſon, we pardon; imbecillity muſt be accepted as an apology for errors, ſince it often is for crimes.

How hard is the fate of the author, who, when he once publiſhes, becomes in the minds of all, whatever they chuſe to make him!

CHAP. III.

Of Men of Letters.

WE diſtinguiſh two kinds of Men of Letters. Both alike make *their principal occupation* to conſiſt in ſtudy; but the one are induced from many concurring circumſtances not to publiſh their labours; and the other devote their life to communicate their ſpeculations to the world. Few men of letters reject the honours of an author, out of modeſty; but ſome are inert through terror, and ſome through eaſe. The French (rich in expreſſions relative to polite letters) diſtinguiſh theſe learned and tranquil ſtudents, by the happy title of *litterateurs.*

The popular notion of a man of letters is as unſettled, as unjuſt. It is ſuppoſed that becauſe a taylor makes a faſhionable coat, and a builder erects a houſe according to modern taſte, a man of letters muſt therefore produce a book, adapted to the reigning mode. It is not neceſſary that every man of letters ſhould become an author, though it is the indiſpenſible duty of an author to be a man of letters. Some ſuppoſe that it is ſufficient when they commence authors, to ſtudy what they write, it would be advantageous if we write alſo what we ſtudy; for without learning, few works are valuable; and he who employs not a uſeful cement, will ſee his brilliant edifice ſcattered by the winds, in ſhining fragments.

The man of letters, is in general, a more amiable character than the author. His paſſions are more ſerene, his ſtudies more regular, his ſolitude more ſoothing. He encounters no concealed or public enemy, and his tranquillity is not a feather in the popular gale. Every diſcovery he makes is a happy conqueſt; every charm of taſte a ſilent enjoyment.

Nor are ſuch characters as the multitude imagine unuſeful in the republic of letters. To the elegant leiſure of theſe ſtudents we are indebted for many of the ornaments of literature; and authors themſelves have recourſe to theſe ſages, as their conductors, and ſometimes as their patrons. Theſe men of letters, like guides over the Alps, though no travellers themſelves, warn the adventurous explorer of impending danger, and inſtruct him in his paſſage.

No literary character is more frequently amiable than ſuch a man of letters. The occupations he has choſen, are juſtly called the ſtudies of humanity; and they communicate to his manners, his underſtanding, and his heart, that refined amenity, that lively ſenſibility, and that luminous acuteneſs which flow from a cultivated taſte. He is an enthuſiaſt; but an enthuſiaſt for elegance. He loves literature, like virtue, for the harmony it diffuſes over the paſſions; and perceives, that like religion, it has the ſingular art of communicating with an unknown and future ſtate. For the love of poſterity is cheriſhed by theſe men of letters; and though they want the energy of genius to addreſs the public, often for that public, they labour in ſilence. It is they who form public libraries; father neglected, and nurture infant genius; project and ſupport benevolent inſtitutions, and pour out the philanthropy of their heart, in that world, which they appear to have forſaken.

Their mild diſpoſitions firſt led them into the province of literature. They found in books an occupation congenial to their ſentiments; labour without fatigue;

tigue; repoſe with activity; an employment, interrupted without inconvenience, and exhauſtleſs without ſatiety. They remain ever attached to their ſtudies; for to give a new direction to life, would require a vaſt effort, and of exertion they are incapable. Their library and their chamber are contiguous; and often in this contracted ſpace, does the opulent owner conſume his delicious hours.— His purſuits are ever changing, and he enlivens the auſtere by the lighter ſtudies. It was ſaid of a great hunter, that he did not live, but hunted; and it may be ſaid of the man of letters, that he does not live, but meditates. He feels that pleaſing anxiety, which zeſts deſire, ariſing from irritative curioſity; and he is that happy man who creates hourly wants, and enjoys the voluptuouſneſs of immediate gratification. The world pity the man of letters inhumed among his books, and their miſtaken wit inſcribes on his door, "here lies the body of our friend!" Yet unthinking men are not without excuſe; his pleaſures are ſilent and concealed. Whatever is not tranquil alarms; whatever is ſerene attracts; he therefore becomes a Mecenas, but never a Virgil; protects letters, but never compoſes books; a lover of art, but never an artiſt.

Theſe men of letters form penetrating critics, whoſe taſte is habitual, and whoſe touch is firm and unerring. Criticiſm is happily adapted to their powers of action; becauſe in criticiſm they partake of the pleaſures of genius, without the painful exertion of invention; and as they are incapable of exerting invention, and direct their ſtudies to form and poliſh judgment, this latter faculty is often more cultivated, and more vigorous, than even that of men of genius.

Few writers attain to any perfection unaſſiſted by ſuch a connoiſſeur ; the vivacity and enthuſiaſm of genius are indulged often in violations of delicacy and truth ; and what the author wants is preciſely what this critic can alone give. It is not to be doubted that the familiar acquaintance which exiſted between Racine, Boileau, and Moliere, was moſt precious to them. We know that they communicated their arts of compoſition, and ſtood centinels over each other with the ſevereſt and moſt vigilant eye. Hence that equable power, and finiſhed elegance which diſtinguiſh their productions.—Corneille, who aſſociated with neither, and like a ſultan would inſpire awe, by concealing himſelf in ſolitary grandeur, loſt theſe invaluable conferences, and indulged genius careleſs of the raſures of taſte. Hence his groſs defects and irregularities. In England, where ſuch an union has been rare, we can trace the ſame effects. Pope, Swift, and Bolingbroke, were of mutual advantage; Pope had not been a philoſopher without the aid of Bolingbroke; and Swift, an inferior poet, without the ſalutary counſels of Pope. Milton, ſevered from all literary friends, has left in his ſublime epics, too many traces of this ſeparation; and it may be ſaid that his greateſt works contain his greateſt blemiſhes. In the finiſhed pieces of his youth, when he had a critical eye at every hour on every page, we find no want of corrective touches. Churchill, a great and irregular genius, with ſuch friends had not only left his ſatires more terſe, and more harmonious, but had been incapable, in his feebleſt hours, to have ſo frequently compoſed, ſuch a ſeries of unconnected and proſaic rhimes.

Often, by an excellent diſcernment, theſe critics give a happy direction to the powers of a young writer. Such was the obſervation of Walſh, whoſe advice to Pope, that correctneſs in our poetry was the only means which remained to diſtinguiſh himſelf, animated the poet, to form that prominent and beautiful feature in his poetical character.

To prove their great utility to men of genius, the following inſtance may ſerve. Not always he whoſe abilities are capable of adorning the page of hiſtory, is alike capable of diſcovering the hidden and perplexed tracks of learned reſearch. Men of genius rarely read catalogues. To whom is the philoſophic writer of modern hiſtory to have recourſe, but to ſuch a man of letters? When Robertſon propoſed writing his various hiſtories, he was ignorant of his ſubject, and irreſolute in his deſigns. We had nearly loſt his elegant compoſitions. He confeſſed in letters, which I have ſeen addreſſed to Dr. Birch, that "he had never acceſs to "copious libraries, nor an extenſive "knowledge of authors." Dr. Birch, who was an admirable *litterateur*, in his anſwer has given a copious and critical catalogue of proper authors, accompanied by valuable information, which is acknowledged by our elegant hiſtorian with warmth. It was certainly that kind of neceſſary knowledge, which only the learning of our ſcholar could ſupply, and without which the project of Robertſon's hiſtories muſt have periſhed in the conception. Theſe ſtudents are therefore uſeful members in the republic of letters, and may be compared to thoſe ſubterraneous ſtreams, which flow into ſpacious lakes, and which, though they flow inviſibly, enlarge the waters which attract the public eye.

Sometimes theſe men of letters diſtinguiſh themſelves by their productions; but though theſe may be excellent, they always rank in the inferior departments of literature; and they rarely occupy more than the firſt place in the ſecond claſs. Their works are finiſhed compoſitions of taſte, or eccentric reſearches of curioſity, ſeldom the fervid labours of high invention. They are ingenious men, not men of genius. If they pour forth their effuſions in verſe, we may have ſome delicate opuſcula; elaborate beauties, but not of an original kind. Such are many of our minor poets, diſtinguiſhed for the refinements, but not the powers of their art. They may excel in happy verſions of a claſſic; of which we have many admirable proofs. Their inquiries may be learned, the fruits of inceſſant labour, and long leiſure; and they ſometimes chuſe for their diſſertations, uncommon topics. Theſe they treat often with ingenuity, but chiefly enchant by a ſeductive manner. They have a certain glow, like a gentle and regular fire; but which never flaſhes and flames like a powerful inventive mind. It is rather the fire raiſed in a forge, than burſting from a natural volcano. Such writers are the authors of thoſe little eſſays, which are precious to men of taſte; on painting, and on poetry; on beauty, and on deformity. Elegant minds, that imbue with elegance light ſubjects; their ſtrokes are not continued and grand, but occaſional and brilliant; and if they rarely excite admiration by new combinations of reflection or imagery, often paint, with a mellow warmth, the beauty of ſentiment. In ſuch attempts they ſucceed; becauſe they ſelect their ſubject, with the fondneſs of a lover, and are familiar with its reſerved graces. When unfortunately they attempt higher topics, which require elevated conceptions, and fervid genius, we perceive their feeble energies. Such writers, like the lark, muſt only riſe on a playful wing, and reſound their favourite notes; but a man of genius, like a hawk, elevates himſelf to diſcover the country, and to dart on his prey.

We ſhall elucidate theſe reflections by the character of M. Sacy. He was modeſt, ingenious, and ſenſitive. He cultivated his talents with ardour, and ſoothed the labours of the bar, with the ſtudies of polite letters. He gave a verſion of Pliny, which has not injured the delicacy of the original. Admitted to the circle of the Marchioneſs de Lambert, he enjoyed the familiarity of men of genius; and by the ſenſibility of his heart, engaged the affections of the Marchioneſs more forcibly than even the genius of ſuperior minds. Animated by his ſocial enjoyments, he wrote with amenity, an intereſting Eſſay on Friendſhip. In this he ſucceeded; for no mind could be more ſuſceptible to it's ſoft and domeſtic raptures. He afterwards compoſed an Eſſay on Glory; but here he did not ſucceed. A man of genius alone can write on ſuch a topic; it requires a mind that expands from the limits of a family to a nation; from a nation to the world; from the world to poſterity. Vaſt and gigantic operation of the ſoul! This is no tranquil ſentiment of taſte, but an impetuous paſſion of genius. A Cicero, not a Sacy, ſhould have written on Glory; but Cicero did not feel more exquiſitely than the amiable Sacy, on the ſubject of Friendſhip.

CHAP. IV.

On ſome Characteriſtics of a Youth of Genius.

I Propose to ſketch ſome of the miſfortunes which often attend a writer, or an artiſt. Should my picture prove to be a faithful repreſentation, my feelings will diſpoſe me to lament my talent.

To what an unknown height might an adequate education elevate the human character, if it were poſſible at his birth to detect the future genius. The oſtrich has the ſagacity to diſcover in it's eggs, thoſe which are worthy of her genial warmth, and ſeparates them from the reſt, which would have proved ſterile to the ſolicitous cares of a mother. It is not thus with the human race. If we could perceive the man of genius, in "the natal hour," we might ſelect him from the croud, and nouriſh the giant, with the aliment a giant may be ſuppoſed to require. At the age of twenty his maturity would appear, and he would have performed at thirty whatever a Horace or a Livy have done; while the vigour of life yet remained to ſhew us ſomething more exquiſite in fancy, and more complicate, yet clear in reaſoning, than at preſent we can poſſibly conceive. But, alas! it is only the romantic eye of the poet, which can obſerve the graces wreathing his cradle with myrtles. I quit my fantaſtic man of genius to deſcend to nature and to experience.

It is rather ſingular that none but princes, and monſters, have the privilege of exciting public curioſity at their birth. A man of genius is dropt among the people, and has firſt to encounter the difficulties of ordinary men, without that confined talent which is adapted to a mean deſtination. Parents, of honeſt diſpoſitions, are the victims of the determined propenſity of a ſon, to a Virgil or an Euclid; and the firſt ſtep into life of a man of genius is diſobedience and grief.

The frequent ſituation of ſuch a man is deſcribed with great ſimplicity, by the aſtrologer Lilly, whether he were a man of genius or not, in the curious memoirs of his life. He there tells us, that having propoſed to his father that he ſhould try his fortune in London, where he hoped his learning and his talents might prove ſerviceable to him, he obſerves that his father (who was incapable of diſcovering his latent genius in his ſtudious diſpoſitions) very willingly conſented to get rid of him, "for I could not *work*, "drive the plough, or endure any coun"try labour; my father oft would ſay I "was *good for nothing*."—The fathers of moſt of our men of genius have employed the ſame expreſſions as the father of Lilly.

An apparent indolence hangs about contemplative genius; he loves the repoſe of the body, and the activity of the mind. It is known that moſt men of great abilities in their puerile days, have retired from the ſports of their mates, and while they were folded up in their little wild abſtractions, have appeared dull to dunces. We often hear, from the early companions or intimates of a man of genius, that at ſchool he had been remarkably heavy and unpromiſing; but, in truth, he was only remarkably penſive, and often pertinaciouſly aſſiduous. The great Boſſuet at ſchool would never join with his young companions, but preferred plodding over a book.—They revenged themſelves by a boyiſh jeſt of calling him, *bos ſuetus aratro*, an ox daily toiling in the plough. It is curious to obſerve, that the young painters, to ridicule the conſtant labours of Domenichino in his youth, did him the honour to diſtinguiſh him alſo by the title of great Ox. Chatterton offers ſtill a better, though a more melancholy inſtance. It is in this manner that one man of genius generally reſembles another.

This inaction of body, and activity of mind, they retain throughout life. A man of genius is rarely enamoured of common amuſements. And the boy who was unadroit at marbles, and refuſed ſcaling the wall of an orchard, when a man, ſeldom excels as an agile hunter, or an elegant dancer. I am deſcribing the enthuſiaſm of talent, not it's unintereſting mediocrity. A man of genius is the ſureſt teſtimony on this point. Let us attend to the minſtrel of Dr. Beattie.

"Concourſe, and noiſe, and toil he ever fled,
"Nor cared to mingle in the clamorous fray
"Of ſquabbling imps; but to the foreſt ſped."

"The exploit of ſtrength, dexterity or ſpeed,
"To him nor vanity, nor joy could bring."

"Would Edwin this majeſtic ſcene reſign,
"For aught the huntſman's puny craft ſupplies?"

I repeat, his mind alone has activity.—The fire ſide in the winter, and ſome favourite tree in the ſummer, will be his ſeats; his amuſements become ſtudies, and his meditations are made in his walks, as well as in his chair. Theſe are ſome of the marks which diſtinguiſh him from the man of the world.

We have been able to diſcover this diſpoſition in youthful genius; the ſame characteriſes his age. It was thus when Mecenas, accompanied by Virgil and Horace, retired one day into the country, the miniſter amuſed himſelf with a tennis-ball; the two poets repoſed on a vernal bank, beneath a delicious ſhade.

Pliny was pleaſed with the Roman mode of hunting; which admitted him to ſit a whole day with his tablets and ſtylus, that (he ſays) if I return with empty nets, my tablets may at leaſt be full.

Among the inauſpicious circumſtances which frequently attend the firſt exertions of juvenile genius, is the want of ſenſibility and diſcernment, in the literary man or artiſt whoſe regard and counſels he ſolicits. Remote from the world of taſte, he cultivates with ardour, but not with art, talents which tremble in the feebleneſs of infancy. When the intellectual offspring is ſtruggling with pain, and fear, into exiſtence, the hand that ſhould aid it's delivery repels with an unnatural barbarity. As Churchill ſays,

"They cruſh a Bard, juſt burſting from the ſhell !"

In theſe wild hours of youth and fancy, the juvenile writer roves like an inſulated wanderer,

wanderer. Thrown on an enchanted iſle, his ear liſtens with an artleſs impatience for the celeſtial tones of an Ariel. It is his unhappy fate to encounter a brutal and malicious Caliban. Such has been the ſituation of ſeveral men of genius when they firſt addreſſed themſelves to an unworthy man of letters for their protector.

Another unfriendly influence over young genius is the want of diſcernment in thoſe, who have the direction of their talents. Pope was often heard to ſay, that he could learn nothing from his maſters, for they wanted ſagacity to diſcover the bent of his genius; and the preceptors of Thomſon, reprimanded the poet, for being too poetical in ſome of his exerciſes. The judicious Quintilian obſerves, that it is not ſufficient that a maſter inſtructs his ſcholars in ſcience; but he ſhould alſo cultivate thoſe particular good qualities nature has beſtowed on each; to add, to thoſe which are deficient, to correct ſome, and to change others.

It is a melancholy truth, that the period at which men receive the colour of their life, is that which is generally leaſt regarded. When we moſt want judgment, we have none; and age is often paſſed only in lamentations over youth. The eventful moment which determines our future years, is mingled and loſt among hours which cannot be recalled. Phyſicians tell us, that there is a certain point in youth, at which our conſtitution takes it's form, and on which the ſanity of life revolves. The exiſtence of genius, experiences a ſimilar dangerous moment. Taſte erroneouſly directed, or genius unſubdued; feebleneſs not invigorated, or vigour not ſoftened; are the accidents which render even a ſuperior mind defective in it's beſt performances. Children by the negligence of their parents become ricketty, and all their life retain ſome trace of the unhappy diſtortion of their limbs. The predominant blemiſhes of an author, if enquired into, will be found generally to originate in their indulgence at a time when they wanted a Quintilian, to deter them by exerciſing ſome contrary quality to that, of which they were vitiouſly enamoured. The epigrammatic points, and ſwelling thoughts of Young; the remote conceits of Cowley, and the turgidity of Johnſon, might probably have been avoided by their authors, had the bent of their mind at an early period, been moulded by a critic hand. Few literary vices are radical, unleſs permitted to ſtrike deeply in the ſoil. Oaks, are but ſaplings, till they are ſuffered to become oaks.

The peculiarities of genius are often derived from local habits, or accidental circumſtances; and this remark ſhews the unwearied vigilance neceſſary to be obſerved in the progreſs and formation of genius. Rembrandt is one inſtance; his peculiarity of ſhade was derived from the circumſtance of his father's mill receiving light from an aperture at the top, which habituated him afterwards to that ſingular manner of broad ſhades. The ſame analogy may be traced in the human intellect. A man of genius is often determined to ſhape his mind into a particular form, by the books of his youth. Dr. Franklin tells us, that when young, and wanting books, he accidentally found De Foe's Eſſay on Projects, from which work he thinks impreſſions were derived that afterwards influenced ſome of the principal events of his life. It was by a ſtudious peruſal of Plutarch's illuſtrious men, that Rouſſeau received that grandeur of ſentiment which diſtinguiſhes all his compoſitions, and created him that romantic and ſenſitive being he ever remained.

If we except ſome rare inſtances, no writer can diſplay his talents ſo indiſputably that the world ſhall be conſcious of his exalted genius, at an early period. Du Bos and Helvetius have fixed that great hour in the ſhort day of man, about the age of thirty; and I recollect an old Spaniſh writer lays it down as an axiom, that no author ſhould publiſh a book under the age of thirty-five. It is certain that many of our firſt geniuſes, have not evinced their abilities till forty. Some indeed ſpring ſuddenly like a flower; while others expand gradually like a tree. Some are like diamonds which receive their fine poliſh from an elaborate art, while others reſemble pearls which are born with their beautiful luſtre.

Is it enquired if during this long period a man of genius does not give ſome evident marks of his future powers? I anſwer that ſometimes he does; ſometimes he does not; and ſometimes they are dubious. They are frequently dubious, becauſe the groſſeſt pedant attends to his ſtudies, if not with the ſame affection, at leaſt with as much conſtancy as the fineſt genius. Who can diſtinguiſh between pertinacity and genius? It is, perhaps, impoſſible to know if a young ſtudent will be a compiler, or an hiſtorian.

The firſt effuſions of a man of genius may be ſo rude, as were thoſe of Swift and Dryden, that no reaſonable hope can be formed of his happy progreſs. The juvenile productions of many great writers evince nothing of that perfection they afterwards obtained; and probably

Raphael when he firſt ſhadowed his rude man, on his father's earthenware, had not one ſtroke of that ideal beauty, which one day his head was to conceive, and his hand to attempt.

Sometimes a ſuperior mind gives no evidence of it's great powers; genius may, like Æneas, be veiled by a cloud, and remain unperceived even by it's aſſociates; as in the caſe of Goldſmith, whom even his literary companions regarded as a compiler, not as a writer of taſte. Hume was conſidered for his ſobriety and aſſiduity, as capable of becoming a good merchant; of Johnſon it was ſaid, that he would never offend in converſation, and of Boileau, that he had no great underſtanding, but would ſpeak ill of no one. Farquhar, who afterwards joined to great knowledge of the world, the livelieſt talents, was at college a heavy companion, and unreaſonably dull.

Theſe, from numerous inſtances, will be ſufficient. Again, when a ſuperior mind evinces it's early genius, it is not always done with all it's energy; we have ſeveral who began verſifiers, and concluded poets.

It happens, however, that ſometimes genius unequivocally diſcovers itſelf in the puerile age. Some appear to have meditated on the art they love, on the boſom of their nurſe; and they are painters and poets before they know the names of their colours, and the fabric of their verſe. Michael Angelo, as yet a child, wherever he went, employed himſelf in drawing, which ſo much alarmed his noble parents, who were fearful their family might be diſhonoured by a man of genius, that they mingled caſtigations with their reprimands. Angelo relinquiſhed the pencil, but it was only to take the bruſh. When he attempted ſtatuary, his father bluſhed to think his ſon was a ſtone-cutter. Angelo perſiſted, and became a great man in oppoſition to his noble progenitors. Velaſquez, a Spaniſh painter, when he performed his ſchool taſks, filled them with ſketches and drawings; and, as ſome write their names on their books, his were known by exhibiting ſpecimens of his genius.

An obſervation may be introduced here which is due to the parents of a man of genius.

We never read the biography of a great character, whether he excelled in letters, or the fine arts, without reprobating the domeſtic perſecution of thoſe, who oppoſed his inclinations, and endeavoured to unfeather the tender pinion of juvenile genius. No poet but is rouſed with indignation, at the recollection of the Port Royal Society thrice burning the poetical romance, which Racine at length got by heart; no geometrician but bitterly criminates the father of Paſcal for not ſuffering him to read Euclid, which he at length underſtood without reading; no painter, but execrates the parents of Angelo, for ſnatching the pencil from his hand, though at length he became ſuperior to every artiſt. All this is unjuſt.

Let us place ourſelves in the ſituation of a parent of a man of genius, and we ſhall find another aſſociation of ideas concerning him than thoſe we have at preſent. We ſee a great man, they a diſobedient child; we ſee genius, they obſtinacy. The career of genius is rarely that of fortune; and very often that of contempt. Even in it's moſt flattering aſpect, what is it, but plucking a few brilliant flowers from precipices, while the reward terminates in the honour? The anxious parent is more deſirous of his ſon's cultivating the low-lands where induſtry may reap, in ſilent peace, no precarious harveſt. But I even confeſs that many parents are themſelves not ſo inſenſible to glory, but that they would prefer a ſplendid poverty, to an obſcure opulence; but who is to be certain that a young man is obeying the ſolicitation of true genius, or merely the fondneſs for an art, in which he muſt never be an artiſt? Literary men themſelves frequently are averſe to encourage the literary diſpoſitions of their children.

It is certain that a love for any art, in youth, is no evidence of genius. The caſual peruſal of Spenſer, which might produce a Cowley, has no doubt given birth to a croud of unknown poets. We have a conſiderable number of minor artiſts, of all kinds, who never attain to any degree of eminence, and yet in their youth felt a warm inclination for their art. If the impulſe of genius, and the perſeverance of deſire, if conception and imitation, could ever be accurately diſtinguiſhed in the philoſophy of the mind, it would be one of the moſt uſeful of metaphyſical ſpeculations. But philoſophers have not yet agreed of the nature of genius, for while ſome conceive it to be a gift; others think it an acquiſition.

We now proceed to ſome reflections on the friends of youthful genius.

The friends of a young writer are generally prejudicial. To find a ſage Quintilian in a private circle, is as rare as to diſcover a ſilver mine in Devonſhire; it is ſuppoſed there are ſeveral, but it is difficult to know where nature has placed them.*

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* It is a duty I owe as an individual, not to paſs over in ſilence the mention of Devonſhire, which I have long conſidered as the claſſical county of England. It has it's poets and it's antiquaries, it's muſicians and it's painters. There is, perhaps, in conſequence, that diffuſion

We may obſerve, that the productions of taſte are much more unfortunate than thoſe of reaſoning. Every man has a tolerable degree of judgment, and with a ſlight exertion, atchieves the comprehenſion of a piece of argument; but taſte is of ſuch rarity, that a long life may be paſſed by ſome, without ever meeting with a perſon of that cultured and ſure taſte, which can touch and feel

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diffuſion of urbanity in the manners of many of it's chief inhabitants, which graces enlightened opulence. Devonſhire has produced more illuſtrious characters than I believe any other county. A Monteſquieu and a Du Bos would attribute this to the felicity of the climate, where myrtles grow unſheltered in the open air. And perhaps the air which cheriſhes myrtles in our northern clime, may have no inconſiderable effect on men. The ſpeculation may not be merely fanciful; here the earth diſplays a more luxuriant herbage on a ſofter mould; the ſkies a brighter azure, and the airs blow with what poets call,

"The ſilky-ſoft favonian gale." *Young.*

A Devonſhire poet is the only Engliſh bard who has a right to tranſpoſe the epithets of Virgil in his deſcriptions of Spring. It is a ſoil favourable to myrtles and artiſts.

the public opinion, before the public forms it's opinion.

When a young writer's firſt eſſay is ſhown, ſome, through mere inability of cenſure, ſee nothing but beauties; others, with equal imbecillity can ſee none; and others, out of pure malice, ſee nothing but faults. Few great writers have been born in that fortunate and rare circle, where every man has taſte, and ſome have candour. A young writer, if he ſuffers his mind to float from uncertainty to uncertainty, will only loſe many years before he diſcovers the imbecillity and defective taſte of the narrow circle of his critics.

A young artiſt muſt baniſh deſpondence, even in the rudeſt efforts of art. He muſt obey the fervid impulſe at the coſt of the pleaſures of his age, and the contempt of his aſſociates. It may alſo be no improper habit to preſerve his juvenile compoſitions. By contemplating them he may perceive ſome of his predominant errors; reflect on the gradual corrections; reſume an old manner more happily, invent a new one from the old he had neglected; and often may find ſomething ſo fine, among his moſt irregular productions, that it may ſerve to embelliſh his moſt finiſhed compoſitions. I cannot but apply to this ſubject, a happy ſimile of Dryden, which a young writer, in the progreſs of his ſtudies, ſhould often recollect.

> "As thoſe who unripe veins in mines explore,
> "On the rich bed, again, the warm turf lay,
> "Till time digeſts the yet imperfect ore,
> "And knows it will be gold another day."

Let him therefore at once ſupply the marble, and be himſelf the ſculptor; he muſt learn to hew out, to form, and to poliſh his genius. He muſt appeal from a contracted circle, to the public; and throughout life, muſt hold this as a maxim, if he would preſerve the neceſſary tranquillity to purſue his ſtudies, that the opinion of an individual muſt be accounted as nothing; not even if this opinion ſhould appear in print. Helvetius juſtly obſerves, what does the opinion of any individual mean? Only, that if favourable, he entertains the ſame ideas as myſelf; and if unfavourable, that we differ.

Who but the public can arbitrate between an artiſt and his critic? Should even the cenſures of the critic be juſt, and the artiſt notwithſtanding pleaſe, it is an additional evidence, that he is among the greateſt artiſts. It is thus with Shakeſpeare and Churchill.

If ſeveral of our firſt writers had attended to the ſentiments of their friends, we ſhould have loſt ſome of our moſt precious compoſitions. The friends of

Thomſon could diſcern nothing but faults in his early productions, not excepting his ſublime Winter! This poet of humanity has left a vindictive epigram againſt one of theſe friends, and it is perhaps the only ill-natured lines, he ever wrote. He came with impatience to London, publiſhed, and made his genius known. Voltaire, when his Brutus was unſucceſsful, was adviſed not to turn his attention to the ſtage. He replied to his friends by writing Zara, Alzire, and Mahomet. The Mirror when publiſhed in Edinburgh was "faſtidiouſly" received; the authors appealed from Edinburgh to London, and they have produced the literary pleaſures of thouſands!

It is dangerous for a young writer to reſign himſelf to the opinions of his friends; it is alike dangerous to paſs them with inattention. What an embarraſſment! If he has not an excellent judgment he will not know what to reject and what to receive of thoſe varying opinions; and if he has an excellent judgment, he wants little of their aid.

A young writer muſt long and diligently ſtudy his great models without venturing on the vanity of criticiſm. He who begins to analyſe before he is acquainted with the nature of his materials, like an ignorant chymiſt, may ſuppoſe he is making experiments, when he is in the act of injuring his untutored and audacious hand. He muſt read for many years his authors, as ſome the goſpels, with the ſame faith and the ſame admiration. For what he once wanted intellectual reliſh, he will come to admire, and what he admires he will imitate. He cannot too often peruſe thoſe many critical performances which the philoſophical taſte of the age has produced. It ſhould be conſidered, that by reading an excellent critic, he receives the knowledge of many years in a few hours. The diſcoveries of art are tardy, and criticiſm ſupplies this deficiency. The more extenſive an artiſt's knowledge of what has been done, the more vaſt will be his powers in knowing what to do. Thoſe who do not read criticiſm, will not even merit to be criticiſed. Yet we have unreflecting ſtudents who inquire of the utility of criticiſm? Nothing may be of happier conſequence than a habit of comparing his thoughts and his ſtyle with the compoſitions of his maſters. If in the compariſon, the ſilent voice of ſentiment exclaims in his heart, "I alſo "am a painter," it is not improbable that the young artiſt may become a Corregio.* If in meditating on the confeſſions of Rouſſeau, he recollects that he has experienced the ſame ſenſations from the ſame circumſtances, and that he has encountered the ſame difficulties, and vanquiſhed them by the ſame means; he may hope one day that the world will receive him as their benefactor. If in a conſtant peruſal of the fineſt writers, he ſees his ſentiments ſometimes anticipated, and in the tumult of his mind as it comes in contact with their's, new ones ariſe, let him proſecute his ſtudies, with ardour and intrepidity, with the fair hope, that one day, he may acquire the talents of a fine writer. Let him then,

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* This ſentiment is nobly expreſſed by Monteſquieu in the cloſe of his preface to his great work on laws. There he ſays, with a conſciouſneſs of mind—"I do "not

> —— wake the ſtrong divinity of ſoul,
> That conquers chance and fate.—
>
> *Akenſide.*

“ not think that I have been totally deficient in point of genius. When I have ſeen what ſo many great men, both in France and Germany, have writ before me, I have been loſt in admiration, but I have not loſt my courage. I have ſaid with Corregio, Ed Io anche ſon Pittore.”

CHAP. V.

Of the domeſtic Life of a Man of Genius.

IF we contemplate the domeſtic life of a man of genius, we rarely obſerve him placed in a ſituation congenial to his purſuits.

The houſe of a man of letters ſhould be the ſanctuary of tranquillity and virtue. The moral duties he inculcates, the philoſophic ſpeculations he forms, and the refinements of taſte he diſcloſes, ſhould be familiar to his domeſtic circle. It is then he is great without effort, and eloquent without art.

The porch and the academy of the ancients muſt have communicated an enthuſiaſm the moderns can never experience. In the golden age of Greece, a Demoſthenes ſaw himſelf encompaſſed by future orators; and Plato liſtened to the plaudits of future philoſophers. It was a moment of delicious rapture, not felt in the ſolitary meditations of the modern philoſopher, in whoſe mind ſenſations ariſe cold and artificial compared to their burſt of ſentiment and their fervour of paſſion.

Yet a virtuous citizen, amidſt the diſſolution of manners, may give to his reſidence a Roman auſterity, and diſplay the ſublime in life, as well as in compoſition. He may be ſeated at an attic ſupper, and,

" Enjoy, ſpare feaſt! a radiſh and an egg."
Cowper.

Nor is ſuch a purity of manners incompatible with refined paſſions, and delicacy of ſentiment; a penetrating glance, a tender preſſure, a ſilent ſmile, may infuſe into his heart thoſe genuine emotions which are ever wanted and never found at tables more ſplendidly profuſe, and more elegantly crouded. A venerable parent, a congenial friend, and a female ſuſceptible of a kindred enthuſiaſm, are perhaps the utmoſt number of happy companions, which a fortunate man could ever aſſemble around him.

Is he deprived of theſe ſocial conſolations, like Johnſon, he calls thoſe whoſe calamities have exiled them from ſociety; and his houſe is an aſſemblage of the blind, the lame, and the poor. In the ardour of his emotions, he diſcovers that a word is wanting in the vocabulary of humanity, and like the Abbé de Saint Pierre, has the honour of fixing a new word in the language; a word that ſerves to explain his own actions—*Bienfaiſance.*

His look is ſerene, for ſtudy, not fortune, forms his ſole occupation; and accident cannot injure the ſtability of his ſoul, for virtue has long been a habit! Is it enquired why this man appears an anomalous being among his fellow citizens?—Becauſe he is the contemporary of the greateſt men. He paſſes his mornings with Cicero and Demoſthenes, and gives his nights to Socrates and Plato.

Such an one is the living exemplar of that ſublime morality which we learn with our latin at ſchool, and which, when we come into the world, we conſider, like our latin, to be merely a dead language.

He renders poverty illuſtrious, and proves that every man may be independent. But we would be independent only, in commanding ſlaves. He who lives like a Spartan in voluptuous Sybaris, is, however, independent; and this age has produced men who paſſed the fervours of youth in a philoſophical ſeverity, and ſtudied (as ſome ſtudy a language) to become great characters. Such were Franklin and Elliot, Chatham and Himel.

The actions and ſtudies of ſuch men are not the only utility they beſtow on the world; they leave ſomething of a more diffuſive energy; they leave the eternal memory of their CHARACTER; they leave to remoteſt poſterity their immortal veſtiges, while virtuous youth contemplates them with enthuſiaſm, and follows them with confidence.

We cloſe any further reflections on the character of a philoſophic writer, and reſtrain ourſelves to obſervations more obvious, and to facts more uſual.

Too often we ſee the ſublimeſt minds, and the tendereſt hearts, ſublime and tender only in their productions. They are not ſurrounded by perſons of analogous ideas, who are alone capable of drawing forth their virtues and affections; as the powers of the magnet remain dormant unleſs applied to particles capable of attraction. We hear of ſeveral great men, that they were undutiful ſons—becauſe they diſpleaſed their fathers in becoming great men—that they were diſagreeable companions—becauſe dullneſs or impertinence wearied—that they were indifferent huſbands—becauſe they were united to women who did no honour to the ſex. Theſe are ordinary accuſations, ever received, while it is forgotten that an accuſation is not always a crime.

It were not difficult to deſcribe the domeſtic life of moſt men of genius, and to obſerve that their inmates have rendered their Lares but rugged deities. I would never draw concluſions from particular circumſtances, ſuch as, that Addiſon deſcribes his lady under the character of Oceana, and Steele delineates

ates his wife under that of Miſs Prue; the one was a ſtormy ocean, and the other a ſtagnated ſtream. But I remark that many of the conſpicuous blemiſhes of ſome of our great compoſitions may reaſonably be attributed to the domeſtic infelicities of their authors. The deſultory life of Camoens probably occaſioned the want of connection in his Epic; Milton's diſtracted family thoſe numerous paſſages which eſcaped eraſure; and Cervantes may have been led, through the haſte of publication, into thoſe little ſlips of memory obſervable in his Satirical Romance. The beſt years of Meng's life were embittered by the harſhneſs of his father; and it is probable that this domeſtic perſecution, from which he was at length obliged to fly, gave him thoſe moroſe and ſaturnine habits which he ever afterwards retained. Of Alonſo Cano, a celebrated Spaniſh painter, it is obſerved by Mr. Cumberland, that he would have carried his art much higher, had not the unceaſing perſecution of the inquiſitors deprived him of that tranquillity which is ſo neceſſary to the very exiſtence of the fine arts. Our poetry had probably attained to it's acmè, before Pope, had the unfortunate circumſtances of Dryden not occaſioned his inequalities, his incorrectneſs, and his copious page.

It is therefore an intereſting obſervation for a man of letters, and an artiſt, to liberate himſelf early from domeſtic anxieties. Let him, like Rouſſeau, leave the rich financier, (though he might become one himſelf,) ſell his watch, and iſſue from the palace, in independence and enthuſiaſm. He muſt alſo, if neceſſary, like Crebillon, be ſatisfied with the reſpectable ſociety of a conſiderable number of greyhounds.* The moſt ardent paſſion for glory can alone ſtimulate to ſuch a retirement; and indeed it is only in ſolitude that the moſt eminent geniuſes have been formed. Solitude is the nurſe of enthuſiaſm, and enthuſiaſm is the parent of genius. Literary ſolitude ſhall therefore form our next object for ſpeculation.

CHAP.

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* Crebillon paſſed much of his life in ſolitude, and pleaſed himſelf with the company of a dozen fine large dogs in his room, which rendered the approach to our poet as formidable to the timorous, as to the delicate.

CHAP. VI.

On Literary Solitude.

MEN of Letters are reproached with an extreme paſſion for retirement; and ſome of the warmeſt philanthropiſts are calumniated as haters of the human race.

Literary Retirement can have no guilt, even if merely paſſed, in the uninterrupted examination of the treaſures of literature. When taſte is formed, and curioſity becomes habitual, the mind will not forego gratifications at once facile and exquiſite. If it is ſaid why the ſame ingenuity of mind, that loves to trace the cauſe, and to arrange the effects, is not turned to the objects of the times, and thus render itſelf of more apparent utility, I anſwer, that in the contemplation of exiſting ſcenes, the mind finds not the ſame gratification as in thoſe of the paſt. What is preſent is not yet terminated; the folly of the age is not yet folly, and judgment pauſes over myſterious paſſions. But in the hiſtory of the human mind, to be calmly traced in the volumes of other times, every illuſion is diſſipated; and we receive the ſame pleaſure, as the ſpectator who beholds the cataſtrophe of the tragedy, or the comedy, which excited his curioſity. The hiſtory of the paſt yields a concluſion, and therefore a perfection which cannot accompany that of the preſent.

The horizon of Reſearch is illimitable, and the diſcoveries of Truth are infinite. New materials ſerve but as the foundations of others; we do not remain ſatisfied with building a houſe, a palace, or a ſtreet; but by imperceptible gradations we erect a city.

This, perhaps, may ſerve as an apology for Men of Letters, who conſume their days with innocence and philoſophy; but who are frequently conſidered to withdraw from duties which thoſe who live to buſtle, and thoſe who buſtle to live, are very far themſelves from practiſing. An active virtue, which in the preſent day may be called heroiſm, is frequently the amiable child of Solitude, but rarely the companion of the buſy and the gay.

I propoſe to ſhew the neceſſity, the pleaſures, and the inconveniencies of Solitude, to thoſe who enlighten the world from the obſcurity of their retirement.

Solitude is indiſpenſable for literary purſuits. Every poet repeats,

Carmina ſeceſſum ſcribentis et otia quærunt.

No conſiderable work has yet been compoſed, but it's author, like an ancient magician, retired firſt to the grove or the cloſet, to invocate his ſpirits. Every compoſition of genius is the production of enthuſiaſm; and while enthuſiaſm agitates the mind, the ſolitude of a man of letters reſembles a ſcene of antient Greece; a grove becomes ſacred, and in every retired ſpot a divinity appears.

But it's enchantments are reſerved alone for him. When he ſighs for the intellectual decencies, and the grace of fancy, and languiſhes in an irkſome ſolitude among crouds, that is the moment to fly into ſecluſion and meditation. He alone experiences the delights of that day, which is compreſſed into a few hours. Where can he indulge, but in ſolitude, the delicious romances of his ſoul? And where but in ſolitude can he occupy himſelf in uſeful dreams by night, and when the morning riſes, fly, without interruption, to his unfiniſhed labours?

bours? He finds many ſecret pleaſures, and ſome glowing anticipations. There is a ſociety, in the deepeſt ſolitude, to which a poliſhed mind ſprings with ardour; it embraces a thouſand congenial ſentiments, and mingles with a thouſand exquiſite ſenſations. The ſolitude of retirement to the frivolous preſents a vaſt and dreary deſert; but to the man of genius it blooms like the enchanted garden of Armida.

Such is the ſituation in which the poet of ſentiment and nature, amidſt the works of his maſters, exclaims

> 'Firſt of your kind, Society divine!'
>
> *Thomſon.*

In this ſtillneſs of ſoul, nature ſeems more beautiful, and more vaſt. We obſerve men of genius, in public ſituations, ſighing for this ſolitude; it is there only they feel their ſuperiority, and live in a future age. Cicero was uneaſy amidſt applauding Rome, and he has diſtinguiſhed his numerous works by the titles of his various villas, where they were compoſed. It will not be denied that Voltaire had talents and a taſte for ſociety; yet he not only withdrew by intervals, but at one period of his life paſſed five years in the moſt ſecret ſecluſion, and perſeverance of ſtudy. Monteſquieu quitted the brilliant circles of Paris for his books, his meditations, and for his immortal work, and for this he was ridiculed by the gay triflers he relinquiſhed. Harrington, to compoſe his Oceana, ſevered himſelf from the ſociety of his friends, and was ſo wrapt in abſtraction, that he was pitied as a lunatic.

A heart thus diſpoſed, tears itſelf, with reluctance, from it's contemplations, and comes into ſociety without a poſſibility of receiving, or producing it's pleaſures. It may be urged that ſeveral men of genius have found no difficulty to level themſelves to ordinary underſtandings. I have heard that Hume found great delight in the ſociety of two old maids, at his evening whiſt; Fontenelle and La Motte would patiently liſten to the frivolous and the dull; but Fontenelle and La Motte, whoſe genius our hiſtorian's greatly reſembled, were two ingenious Frenchmen, celebrated for their politeneſs and their wit, not for their ſenſibility and enthuſiaſm.

When a man of letters ſeeks the conſolations of ſociety, he would *reſt* a mind enfeebled with one continued purſuit; or exerciſe it by ſuffering it to take thoſe infinite directions which the diverſities of converſation offer. If it is wearied, the ſimpleſt actions pleaſe; it is a child that would ſport with flowers and pebbles; if it iſſues in all it's force, it is an athlet that leaps in the arena, and calls for an adverſary. It is Montaigne ſporting with his cat, or Johnſon maintaining a theſis amidſt his marvelling friends.

In either caſe, ordinary ſociety offers no charms, and can never be charmed. A feeble mind knows not to unbend, becauſe it was never yet extended; nor can it elevate itſelf becauſe the ſoul, according to the figure of Plato, has no wings.

Thus the mind of genius feels a continued irritation in the croud. Let us attend to the expreſſions of genius, which can beſt deſcribe it's peculiar ſenſibilities. Petrarch frequently withdrew to his immortal valley, alike diſguſted with the groſſneſs of the vulgar, and the frivolity of the courtier; he could not patiently ſuffer this Being, whom he calls 'un huom del vulgo!' Cowley regarded the common people as he did beaſts, and was diſpleaſed as much with what he calls "the great as the little "vulgar." Among the perverted images of a living orator, is that "of the hoofs "of the ſwiniſh multitude," and a venerable ancient prefers the ſociety of his dog to ſuch men. Fools (cries Du Clos) reconcile men of genius to each other; from the impoſſibility of living with fools. And to cloſe our teſtimonies, with a fine expreſſion from Milton,

> " Among unequals what ſociety
> " Can ſort, what harmony or true delight?

The interruption of viſitors have been feelingly lamented by men of letters.—The mind, occupied in maturing it's ſpeculations, feels the approach of the viſitor by profeſſion, as the ſudden gales of an eaſtern blaſt, paſſing over the bloſſoms of ſpring. We are afraid, ſaid ſome of the viſitors to Baxter, that we break in upon your time. To be ſure you do, replied the diſturbed and blunt ſcholar. Urſinus was laborious in his literary avocations, and to hint as gently as he could to his friends, that he was avaricious of time, he placed an inſcription over the door of his ſtudy, deſiring, that if any one chuſed to remain, they muſt join in his labours. The amiable Melancthon, incapable of a harſh expreſſion, when he received theſe idle viſits, only noted down the time he had expended, that he might reanimate his induſtry, and not loſe a day. Among the diſturbers of domeſtic tranquillity, may be claſſed thoſe unhappy wanderers who beſiege the houſes of their neighbours, and like the barbarian ſoldier, enter the apartment of an Archimedes, and murder him in the midſt of his ſtudies.

But I turn now to ſketch a different picture of literary ſolitude.

Zimmerman has compoſed an elaborate work on Solitude, in a general manner. His ſentiments are glowing, and perhaps they are dangerous. Of ſolitude, men of genius muſt always be ſufficiently enamoured, without having read that ſeducing deſcription of it's ſublime pleaſures. Let us not, however, forget nature in enthuſiaſm. A man of genius, though he addreſſes poſterity, has ſenſibilities and deſires which can only be gratified by his contemporaries. When great minds cannot readily find that in the world they ſeek, they haſten into ſecluſion. The craving void remains unfilled; and for him who ſighs for popularity in ſolitude, every hour ſharpens deſire, and aggravates diſappointment.

The ſolitude which is ſought by the young ſtudent is not borne without repining. To tame the fervid wildneſs of youth, to the ſtrict regularities of ſtudy, is a ſacrifice which requires all the enthuſiaſm of the ſincereſt votary. The Academic Bower is not without it's rainy days. Milton, not apt to vent complaints, appears to have felt this irkſome period of life. He employs theſe expreſſions in the preface to Smectymnus. "It is but juſtice, not to defraud of due " eſteem the *weariſome labours* and *ſtudious* " *watchings*, wherein I have ſpent, and " *tired out*, almoſt a whole youth."

Perhaps ſolitude in a later period of life, or rather the neglect which attends that ſolitude, is felt with more ſenſibility. It was thus that Cowley, that enthuſiaſt for rural ſecluſion, in his retirement called himſelf "the melancholy Cowley;" and Mr. Maſon has judiciouſly transferred the ſame epithet to Gray. Can we read his letters, and not feel it's juſtneſs? we lament alſo, the loſs of Cowley's correſpondence, through the miſtaken notion of Sprat, a loſs certainly as invaluable, as irrecoverable. Theſe are the beſt memoirs of a man's heart; the regiſter of his feelings. But Shenſtone has filled his pages with the cries of an amiable heart that bleeds in the oblivion of ſolitude. In one of his letters, are theſe melancholy expreſſions: "Now I am come from a viſit, every little uneaſineſs is ſufficient to introduce my whole train of melancholy conſiderations, and to make me utterly diſſatisfied with the life I now lead, and the life I foreſee I ſhall lead. I am angry, and envious, and dejected, and frantic, and diſregard all preſent things as becomes a madman to do. I am infinitely pleaſed (though it is a gloomy joy) with the application of Dr. Swift's complaint, that he is forced to die in a rage, like a poiſoned rat in a hole." Without exciting ſimilar paſſages in proſe, let the lover of ſolitude muſe on it's picture throughout the year, in the following ſtanza.

"Tedious again to curſe the drizzling day!
"Again to trace the wintery tracks of ſnow!
"Or ſoothed by vernal airs again ſurvey,
"The ſelf-ſame hawthorn bud, and cowſlips blow."

Swift's letters paint a terrifyng picture of ſolitude, and at length his deſpair cloſed with idiotiſm. The amiable Greſſet, could not ſport with the brilliant wings of his fancy, without ſome querulous expreſſions of an irkſome ſolitude. In his "Epiſtle to his Muſe," he thus exquiſitely paints the ſituation of men of genius.

"—— Je les vois, victimes du genie,
"Au foible prix d'un eclat paſſager,
"Vivre iſolés ſans jouir de la vie."

And afterwards he adds,

"Vingt ans d'Ennuis pour quelque jours de gloire!"

The following anecdote may amuſe the reader. When Menage was attacked by ſome, and abandoned by others, in a ſplenetic humour, he retreated into the country, and gave up his famous Mercuriales, when the literati aſſembled at his houſe. He expected to find that tranquillity in the country which he had frequently deſcribed in his verſes; but, as he was only a poetical plagiariſt, it is not wonderful that he was greatly diſappointed. Some malicious perſon having killed his pigeons, it gave him more vexation than his critics. He haſtened his return to Paris. It is better, he cried, ſince we are born to ſuffer, to feel only reaſonable ſorrows.

It is reaſonably to be ſuſpected, that he only prefers ſolitude, who cannot accompliſh his wiſhes in ſociety. I have not yet been able to diſcover a great genius, who, courted by an attentive world, perſiſted in his retirement. Voltaire, when his reputation was not yet eſtabliſhed, ſees only happineſs in ſecluſion; all his letters abound with quotations from the poets, of the raptures of ſolitude. When his tragedies gave him celebrity, then his letters found a different ſtrain, and he heſitates not to declare to his friends, how unhappy was his ſituation; conſtrained to remain in ſolitude while his tragedies were acting every night at Paris.

To have ſtood inſulated amidſt ſociety has been the hard fate of ſome whoſe preſence would have embelliſhed the moſt ſelect. This neglect of the world has inſpired their compoſitions with a querulous ſenſibility; a ſoftening charm, that whatever it may have coſt their feelings, renders their beautiful lamentations more intereſting. The tender ſhades of melancholy throw a grace amidſt the brilliant lights of their fancy. It is ſaid that the nightingale, with a thorn in her breaſt, does not ſing with a leſs enchanting melody. Is not the voice of the heart heard in theſe verſes?

> "Poor moraliſt! and what art thou?
> "A ſolitary fly.
> "No hive haſt thou of hoarded ſweets."
>
> *Gray.*

On the whole it may be ſaid, that a great experience of the world, united with a great love of virtue, render ſolitude deſirable. When they exiſt ſeparately, it becomes irkſome. A great experience of the world, without virtue, will pine in ſolitude, to exert it's talent on thoſe who are ſimple and unexperienced. A great love of virtue, without experience of the world, forms in the leiſure of retirement, thoſe utopian projects, which it pants to call into exiſtence.

CHAP. VII.

On the Meditations and Converſations of Men of Genius.

A Continuity of attention is one of the grand characteriſtics of genius, and in proportion to the degree of the intenſeneſs of abſtraction are it's powers often obtained. A work on Abstraction, or the Art of Meditation, is a deſideratum. It would be a valuable preſent to all, and might prove of immenſe advantage to him, who never had more than one ſolitary idea.

Among the regulations of this art, it might not be improper to recommend darkneſs. Several profound thinkers, could never purſue the operations of their minds, in the diſtraction of light, when the leaſt remiſſion of thought produces a new object, and an extraneous ideas. Mallebranche and others, cloſed their ſhutters when they wiſhed to abſtract themſelves. That darkneſs is a great aid to thinking, would appear from what moſt men experience relative to their thoughts during the night. The ſilence and obſcurity of that time are moſt friendly to abſtraction, and often when ſleep forſakes us, and we muſe, our thoughts ſurpriſe by the vividneſs of fancy. If at that moment, in the words of one of our moſt elegant poems, we do not,

> "Snatch the faithleſs fugitives to light."
>
> *Pleaſures of Memory.*

If Memory does not chain the children of Imagination, they are ſcattered, and fly the beams of the morning. Our mind, among a tumultuous croud, ſuddenly finds itſelf forſaken and ſolitary. It is at that unregarded period of our exiſtence, that men of moderate capacities feel an extraordinary expanſion, and men of genius ſome of their moſt original combinations. Yet then, how few, like Pope, have an old woman at hand, to bring pens and paper!

Men of genius muſt conſider themſelves as ſo many vigilant guardians of the infinity of nature. So treacherous is Recollection, and ſo capriciouſly does Memory ſupply her treaſures to Fancy, that ſome of the happieſt conceptions of genius are fortuitous; they come, we do not know from where, and ſpring we do not know how; but if not ſeiſed at the moment of perception, they are like autumnal clouds, whoſe romantic figures diſſolve, as we gaze.

It is ſaid, that collections have been made, ſmall ones no doubt, of bon mots by perſons who never ſaid but one good thing; it would form no incurious miſ-

"cellany, if it were poſſible to ſelect ſome of thoſe thoughts of great thinkers, which were never written. We ſhould find many admirable ones. The painters have this advantage over writers, their ſlighteſt ſketches are immediately ſieſed, and become as valuable to poſterity as their more complete labours.

The ART OF MEDITATION is an art which we may inceſſantly exerciſe, and need not remit for long intervals of repoſe, as every other art. And yet, notwithſtanding the facility of practice, and we ſhould ſuppoſe the hourly ſkill we might obtain, every manual art, is brought to perfection, while of the art of the mind, millions are yet ignorant of the firſt rudiments. Quintilian finely obſerves, that men of genius command it at all times, and in all places. In their walks, at table, and at aſſemblies, they turn their eye inwards, and can form an artificial ſolitude. The powers of abſtraction, which ſome men have exerciſed, appear to puny thinkers to have ſomething of the marvellous; in the regions of the mind, they look like ſo many Gullivers among a million of Lilliputians. Of Socrates it is ſaid, that he would frequently remain an entire day and night in the ſame attitude, abſorbed in meditation; and why ſhall we doubt this when we know that La Fontaine and Thomſon, Deſcartes and Newton, experienced the ſame abſtraction? In Cicero's Treatiſe on Old Age, Cato praiſes Caius Sulpitius Gallus, who, when he ſat down to write in the morning, was ſurpriſed by the evening, and when he took up his pen in the evening, was ſurpriſed by the appearance of the morning. Of the Italian poet Marini, it is ſaid, that he was once ſo abſorbed in the reviſion of his Adonis, that he ſuffered his leg to be burnt, for ſome time, without any ſenſibility.

This enthuſiaſm renders every thing that ſurrounds us as diſtant as if an immenſe interval ſeparated us from the ſcene. It is related of a modern aſtronomer, that one ſummer night when he was withdrawing to his chamber, the brightneſs of the heavens ſhewed a phenomenon. He paſſed the whole night in obſerving it, and when they came to him early in the morning and found him in the ſame attitude, he ſaid, like one who had been recollecting his thoughts for a few moments, "it muſt be thus; "but I'll go to bed before 'tis late." He had gazed the entire night in meditation and did not know it.

Enthuſiaſm, which is active genius, preſents an object more ſingular than genius in it's quieſcent meditations. The flowing ſtream is loſt in an ocean rolling impetuouſly. This phrenzy of abſtraction, and wonderful agitation of the ſoul, is required not only in the fine arts, but wherever a great exertion muſt be employed. It was felt by Gray in his loftieſt excurſions; and is it not the ſame power which impels the villager, when to aſtoniſh his rivals, in a conteſt for leaping, he retires back ſome ſteps, ferments his mind to a fervent reſolution, and clears the eventful bound? It was a maxim with one of our ancient and great Admirals, in the reign of Elizabeth, that a height of paſſion, amounting to phrenzy, was neceſſary to qualify a man for that place. A variety of inſtances might be given of this fine enthuſiaſm, which has ever accompanied the artiſt, at the moment he produced excellencies.

It has ſometimes ariſen into a delirium. The ſoul of Rouſſeau was bewildered in the deluſions of fancy, and the momentary diſpoſitions of his mind coloured exterior objects. Petrarch in that minute narrative of a viſion in which Laura appeared to him, and Taſſo in the converſations with his inviſible ſpirit, expanded their ſublime imaginations to a dangerous phrenzy. This delicious inebriation of the heart, occaſions ſo intenſe a delight, that to deſcribe this character of the ſoul, requires, what one of theſe exquiſite minds has called

“ Thoughts that breathe and words that burn!”

The ancients ſaw nothing ſhort of a divine inſpiration in this agitation of the mind. It affects men of genius phyſically. Fielding ſays, “ I do not doubt “ but that the moſt pathetic and affecting “ ſcenes have been writ with tears!” He, perhaps, would have been pleaſed to have confirmed his obſervation, by the following circumſtance. Metaſtaſio has written a beautiful Sonnet, on occaſion of having ſhed tears in writing an Opera.* When the firſt idea of the Eſſay on the Arts and Sciences ruſhed on the contemplation of Rouſſeau, it occaſioned ſuch a fever of the mind, and trembling of his frame, that it approached to a delirium. The tremors of Dryden, after having written an Ode, (a circumſtance accidentally handed to us by tradition) were probably not unuſual with him.

Chance has preſerved but a few of ſimilar inſtances; this enthuſiaſm, indeed, can only be obſerved by men of genius themſelves; but when it moſt powerfully agitates them, they can leaſt perceive it. At that moment of exquiſite extravagance, like a religious viſionary, they pierce into "the heaven of "heavens,"

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* This Sonnet ſhall be given at the cloſe of the volume.

"heavens," and when they return to their chair and their table, the effect has ceaſed, and the golden hour of ſublime rapture muſt terminate like other hours, in vulgar appetites that offend Fancy and gratify Nature.

This irritability of mind has ſometimes rendered ſociety diſpleaſing to ſeveral men of genius. Whenever Rouſſeau paſſed a morning in company, he ſays, it was obſerved that in the evening he was diſſatisfied and diſturbed. Rouſſeau may be conſidered by ſome, as a mind too peculiar, to be taken as a guide in our examination into the character of men of genius. If our young authors, however, would meditate on certain parts of his character, their virtues might be more elevated, and their ſtyle more exquiſite, than the model which any other literary character of this age preſents to them.

Abſorbed in his meditations, the man of genius lives in one continued ſeries of reflection; always himſelf, ſeldom another; frequently the real artiſt loves nothing but his art, and his very amuſements and relaxations receive the impreſſion of this enthuſiaſm. Not without an apparent haughtineſs, which often is but the natural and dignified expreſſion of an elevated mind; and he appears awkward or ignorant of thoſe petty attentions which form the ſcience of thoſe who have no ſcience. A great Princeſs was deſirous of ſeeing one of the firſt Literary Characters of the age; her diſappointment was inconceivable; he ſat awkwardly and ſilently on his chair, and made the moſt perplexed bow, ſhe had yet ſeen.

We often view the man of real genius inſulated in a brilliant circle; while the intriguing and faſhionable author, whoſe heart is more corrupt than his head, is admired becauſe he has diſcovered the art of admiring. The triflers conſider him to be a man of genius; he employs their own ideas; both are therefore gratified.

It is however certain, that this abſtraction and awkwardneſs which render a man of genius ridiculous and inconſiderable in the private circle, are the cauſe of his ſucceſs with the public. Often his private defects are the ſource of his public qualities; his bluntneſs may be a lively perception of truth; his coldneſs a rigid candour; his tedious diſcuſſion may be an accuracy of reaſoning, and his diſagreeable warmth the ardour which animates his works with the public. It was the exceſſive vanity and ſelf-love of Cicero and Voltaire, that gave birth to all their vaſt deſigns. To pleaſe the public, and his circle is incompatible—to this the frivolous will not aſſent—when of their numerous body one accompliſhed trifler ſhall be acknowledged as a great genius, this obſervation ſhall be deemed erroneous. But to cloſe a diſpute of the moſt ancient date, I ſhall quote the remark of a *Lord*. Shafteſbury (for nobility loſes it's title and often it's rank in the republic of letters) has ſaid, "that it may happen that a perſon "may be ſo much the worſe author for "being the finer gentleman."

Many reaſons may be alledged why genius is defective in ordinary converſation; one may be ſufficient; the want of analogous ideas. The ſpirit of faſhionable ſociety and that of ſtudy, are incompatible. The language of the politeſt circle may be defined the art of ſpeaking idly to an idler. To ſpeak idly, is not an acquirement of facility. A man of genius is rarely verſant in the faſhionable vocabulary, and in a dialogue of elegant inanity, which ſhould be rapid and various, he heſitates to find a remote idea, and ſtops to correct an imperfect expreſſion. How often will it be fortunate for him if he eſcapes being underſtood! It is rather ſingular that our poliſhed ſociety ſhould bear ſo cloſe a reſemblance to the converſations of the Hottentots—of the Hottentots?—Yes! for we are told that they conſider *thinking* as the ſcourge of human nature.

The refined ſenſibility of men of genius, renders them uneaſy companions. They diſcover a character too early, and too ſagaciouſly, for the intereſts of converſation. Dunces are excellent companions for dunces; the ſame ideas, and the ſame judgments; the opacity of the intellect is no detriment, for, like the blind, they can perform their ſtated rounds in the night without inconvenience.

A man of genius can rarely be a favourite with ſuch a party, even if they ſhould have ſome taſte and ſome information. His works they applaud, becauſe that is faſhionable, but they neglect the author, who may happen to be very unfaſhionable.

The frivoliſt author will be the evening favourite; he ſports not without grace on the brilliant ſurface of the ſoul; but is irrecoverably loſt when he paſſes over it's depths; the ſwan that gracefully glides down rivers, would periſh on ſeas. The man of genius ſits like a melancholy eagle whoſe pinions are clipped, and who is placed to rooſt among domeſtic fowls.

A man of genius utters many things in converſation which appear extravagant or abſurd; when printed they are found admirable. How often the public differs from the individual; there may be a century's opinion betwixt them. This reflection reminds me of an Athenian anecdote. A ſtatuary at Athens, made a figure of Minerva. Thoſe friends who were admitted into his ſhop (an ancient cuſtom the moderns preſerve) were ſurpriſed at it's rough ſtrokes and coloſſal features. Before the artiſt they trembled for him; behind him they calumniated. The man of genius ſmiled at the one, and forgave the other. When the figure was fixed in a public place, and inſpected by the city, and not merely by individuals, the attic judges admired the ſoftneſs of the traits, and the majeſty of the figure. We muſt never forget that there is a certain diſtance, at which opinions, as well as ſtatues, are to be viewed; and he who addreſſes an attic public, knows, that it's enlightened ſentiments, are rarely to be found in a private circle.

It is not neceſſary to produce inſtances of the deficiencies of men of genius in converſation. It is ſufficient to obſerve, that the ſublime Dante was taciturn or ſatirical; Addiſon and Moliere were ſilent; Corneille and Dryden were no amuſing companions. Vaucanſon was ſaid to be as much a machine as any he made.

To the intimates of theſe ſuperior men, who complained of their defects, I would thus have replied—Do their productions not delight and ſurpriſe you?—You are ſilent; I beg your pardon. The *public* has informed you of a great name; you would not otherwiſe have perceived the precious talent of your neighbour.—You have examined his compoſitions; and would you have him reſemble *yourſelves?* You know nothing of your friend but his *name*.

A man of genius may, however, be rendered the moſt agreeable companion. Few artiſts but are eloquent on the art in which they excel. He is an exquiſite inſtrument if the hand of the performer knows to call forth the rich confluence of his ſounds. If,

> " The flying fingers touch into a voice."
>
> *D'Avenant.*

If you love the man of letters, ſeek him in the privacies of his ſtudy; or if he be a man of virtue, take him to your boſom. It is in the hour of confidence and tranquillity, his genius may elicit a ray of intelligence, more fervid than the labours of poliſhed compoſition.

CHAP. VIII.

Men of Genius limited in their Art.

WE have examined in the preceding Chapter ſeveral reaſons why men of genius are often incapable of pleaſing in the verſatile converſation of a mixed ſociety. Another obſervation offers; their powers of pleaſing are even limited in the art in which they excel. They are confined (ſays Du Bos) to particular branches in that art.

This obſervation, reiterated without effect, has become trite, while it would appear by moſt authors, conſidering themſelves univerſal geniuſes, that it was on the contrary, a dangerous novelty. Literary hiſtory continually confirms it's verity; and theſe failures of eminent men are ſo many inſtructions which Nature dictates; but her pupils receive her admonitions with contempt.

Nature is "a jealous God," and ſeveral of our great writers when they have riſen in rebellion againſt her, have only ſuffered by the violation. Fielding, excellent in his novels, when his aid was required for the theatre, could never write a tolerable drama. Congreve, celebrated for his pointed wit, when he took up the reigning topic, wrote the feebleſt verſe; Rowe, ſucceſsful in the ſoft tones of tragedy, is remarkable for a miſerable failure in comedy; La Fontaine, that exquiſite fabuliſt, found that his opera was hiſſed. The abſurdities of Voltaire, the moſt ſucceſsful of univerſal writers, are only forgiven for his inexhauſtible wit and happy irony.

The moſt original genius of our age, with diſcernment equal to his wit, confines himſelf to that ſpecies of poetry in which he can fear no rival. Songs, more delicious than the odes of Anacreon, and ſatires, more pungent than thoſe of Horace; compoſitions more admirable than imitable; theſe are the limits which, like a great politician, he draws round his empire. He has no diſpoſition to rival Milton in an epic, or Shakeſpeare in a tragedy. Peter Pindar will never, therefore, experience the fate of Louis the Great; to make brilliant conqueſts in the prime of life, and view his reputation die before himſelf, by a vain attempt at univerſal monarchy.

But ſome ingenious men are willing to oppoſe this precept, and preſume to think that Nature is never ungrateful, when ſhe receives the proper attentions. It is not difficult to find ſome ingenious artiſts, who ſhew abilities in various modes of compoſition; but to evince *abilities*, and to diſplay *genius*, are removed at a long interval from each other. True genius has rarely this ſuppleneſs;

but what the French call *le bel eſprit*, has it often in a wonderful degree. Writers endowed with the *bel eſprit*, can compoſe hiſtory and romance, and moral and poetical eſſays, with the ſame ingenuity. A man of genius will only write a hiſtory, or a romance; moral, or poetical eſſays; but his performances remain with the language, while the reputation of a *bel eſprit*, like ſome artificial fires, become ſuddenly extinct. And it is curious to obſerve, that the very ingenious Du Clos is denied by the French critics, to be a man of genius, becauſe he wrote equally well on a variety of ſubjects.

Nor is it ſurpriſing that even a man of genius ſhould fail in preſerving an equal power over every province of his art; the genius of man being neceſſarily limited compared to art itſelf; and he who raiſes admiration by his ſkill in one department, will never equal his faculty in another. He who *excels*, like a Butler in wit and ſatire, will find it impoſſible to *excel* like a Milton, in ſentiment and imagination. The minds of men are ſo many different ſoils; and the great art conſiſts in planting the trees adapted to the ſoil.

I know no inſtance to ſhew that a great poet *excelled* as a painter, or that a great muſician *excelled* as a ſtatuary. But it is not difficult to prove, that the moſt eminent men of genius have found their talent confined to their art, and even to departments of their art.

The ancients therefore wiſely addicted themſelves only to one ſpecies of compoſition. The poet was not an hiſtorian, nor the hiſtorian a poet; but the poet was a poet, and the hiſtorian an hiſtorian.

I have been induced to touch on this critical admonition, becauſe it is ſometimes denied; and I think the error ariſes from not diſtinguiſhing the grand compoſitions of genius, from the pretty curioſities of the *bel eſprit*, which may be defined mimetic genius. Whenever this well-known verſe ſhall be controverted, it will be fatal to the progreſs of genius;

> " One ſcience only will one genius fit."
>
> *Pope.*

He who writes on topics of different ſpecies, cannot meditate much on any; with him all is a beautiful diſtraction rather than an accompliſhed beauty; he can only repeat what has been already given, or give what will not merit to be repeated. Writers of mediocrity, by a long and patient devotion to *one kind* of compoſition, have often attained conſiderable merit; but how much more forcibly muſt this reſolute perſeverance act on a mind of original powers. We may compare thoſe who write on different arts, or multifarious topics, to excurſive merchants, who make ſmall fortunes in various places, and ſpend them there; writers who concentrate their powers on one object, are like thoſe who inceſſantly accumulate, but exhauſt their ſplendid opulence, in the proper place, at their native reſidence.

It is the obſervation of one of our beſt critics and poets, in his admirable preface to Homer, that "no author or man "ever excelled all the world in more "than one faculty." It is not, however, denied that a man of genius ſhould be intimate with the principles of every art; in many he may become an eſteemed artiſt, but in one only he can be a maſter.

On ne vit qu'a demi quand on n'a qu'un ſeul gout;
Le veritable eſprit ſait ſe plier à tout.

Voltaire.

CHAP. IX.

Some Obſervations reſpecting the Infirmities and Defects of Men of Genius.

THE modes of life of a man of genius are often tinctured with eccentricity and enthuſiaſm. Theſe are in an eternal conflict with the uſages of common life. His occupations, his amuſements, and his ardour, are diſcordant to daily purſuits, and prudential habits. It is the characteriſtic of genius to diſplay no talent to ordinary men; and it is unjuſt to cenſure the latter when they conſider him as born for no human purpoſe. Their pleaſures and their ſorrows are not his pleaſures and his ſorrows. He often appears to ſlumber in diſhonourable eaſe, while his days are paſſed in labours, more conſtant and more painful than thoſe of the manufacturer. The world are not always aware that to meditate, to compoſe, and even to converſe with ſome, are great labours; and as Hawkeſworth obſerves, that "wearineſs may be contracted in an arm chair."

Such men are alſo cenſured for an irritability of diſpoſition. Many reaſons might apologize for theſe unhappy variations of humour. The occupation of making a great name, is, perhaps, more anxious and precarious than that of making a great fortune. We ſympathiſe with the merchant when he communicates melancholy to the ſocial circle in conſequence of a bankruptcy, or when he feels the elation of proſperity at the ſucceſs of a vaſt ſpeculation. The author is not leſs immerſed in cares, or agitated by ſucceſs, for literature has it's bankruptcies and it's ſpeculations.

The anxieties and diſappointments of an author, even of the moſt ſucceſsful, are incalculable. If he is learned, learning is the torment of unquenchable thirſt, and his elaborate work is expoſed to the accidental recollection of an inferior mind, as well as the fatal omiſſions of wearied vigilance. If he excels in the magic of diction, and the graces of fancy, his path is ſtrewed with roſes, but his feet bleed on inviſible yet piercing thorns. Rouſſeau has given a glowing deſcription of the ceaſeleſs inquietudes by which he acquired ſkill in the arts of compoſition; and has ſaid, that with whatever talent a man may be born, the art of writing is not eaſily obtained. The depreſſions and elevations of genius, are deſcribed by Pope

"Who pants for glory finds but ſhort repoſe,
"A breath revives him, or a breath o'erthrows."

The anxious uncertainty of an author for his compoſitions, is like the ſtate of the lover who writes to his miſtreſs; he repents, and thinks he has written too much, and he recollects that he had omitted things of the greateſt moment. When, indeed, his work is received with favour, he reſembles Latona, as deſcribed by Ovid, who contemplated with ſecret joy, her daughter Diana, diſtinguiſhed among the wood-nymphs, and whoſe appearance was taller, and more lovely than her companions.

It is obſerved by M. La Harpe (an author by profeſſion) that as it has been proved there are ſome maladies peculiar to artiſts, there are alſo ſorrows which are peculiar to them; and which the world can neither pity nor ſoften, becauſe it cannot have their conceptions. We read not without a melancholy emotion, the querulous expreſſions of men of genius. We have a little catalogue *de calamitate Litteratorum*; we might add a volume by the addition of moſt of our own authors.* The too ſenſible Smollet has left this teſtimonial to poſterity of his feelings. In one of his prefaces he ſays, "had ſome of thoſe who were pleaſed to "call themſelves my friends, been at any "pains to deſerve the character, and told "me ingenuouſly what I had to expect "in the capacity of an *Author*, I ſhould "in all probability have ſpared myſelf "the *incredible labour* and *chagrin* I have "ſince undergone." This is a text which requires no commentary. Hume has given the hiſtory of his writings, and we find that it required to the full, all his patient philoſophy to ſupport his ill reception. The reaſoning Hume propoſed changing his name and his country. Parties are formed againſt a man of genius, as happened to Corneille and Milton; and a Pradon and a Settle are preferred to a Racine and a Dryden. What muſt have been the agonies of the neglected Collins when he burnt his exquiſite odes at the door of his publiſher! The great Bacon bequeathed his name and his works to foreigners, and to a future age; nor muſt we forget the dignified complaints of the Rambler, with which he awefully cloſes his work in appealing to poſterity.

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* The materials are ready for publication; but the hope of it's utility has paſt, ſince a *Literary* Fund eſtabliſhed in attic London found too many claimants and too few ſubſcribers. It has died away; while the *Muſical* Fund is patroniſed by the Great, which ſeems to prove that they have finer ears than underſtandings.

The votaries of the arts and ſciencies, are called by Cicero, Heroes of Peace; their labours, their dangers, and their intrepidity, make them heroes; but peace is rarely the ornament of their feveriſh exiſtence.

It is a mortification experienced by ſeveral men of genius, that they have never acquired that reputation they might have merited, by not having been enabled to carry their genius to it's perfection. A variety of circumſtances may hinder ſuch a writer from occupying the diſtinguiſhed place his abilities promiſed. Some authors, of the firſt-rate genius, are neglected, becauſe deficient in that taſte, which is alone attained by long culture and an enlarged education. Piron was a writer of as great genius, and original powers, as any of the French poets; but he has failed of ſecuring himſelf a ſeat among the maſters of the French Parnaſſus. He has himſelf, in ſome ſketches of his life, aſſigned the reaſons of this failure; till the age of twenty-five, he was confined to the narrow circle of unlettered friends; he paſſed ten or twelve years afterwards at Paris in obſcurity; ſo that he was about forty, when by the advice of Crebillon, he eſſayed his powers on his faſtidious theatre, and though he has evinced high genius, he has only ſatisfied his refined nation by one performance.

Some are now only agreeable, who might have been great writers, had their application to ſtudy, and the modes of their life been different. In Mr. Greaves' lively recollections of his friend Shenſtone, are ſome judicious obſervations on this ſubject. He has drawn a compariſon between the elevated abilities of Gray, and the humble talents of Shenſtone; and he has eſſayed to ſhew, that it was the accidental circumſtances of Gray's place of birth, education, his admittance into ſome of the beſt circles, and his aſſiduous application to ſcience, which gave him that ſuperiority over the indolence, the retirement, and the inertion of a want of patronage, which made Shenſtone, as Gray familiarly ſaid, "hop "round his walks" like a bird in a ſtring. I muſt again remind the reader of another apparent paradox of Helvetius, who ſays, that it is the different modes of education which influence men ſo wonderfully; and that *genius* may be *acquired* whenever a proper ſtudy is accompanied by a fervent paſſion for any particular art or ſcience. This fervent paſſion may be only another name for what is called genius. I believe, however, that Shenſtone, who now occupies a ſubordinate ſeat, in the Temple of Fame, might have been placed among the higher claſſes. Perhaps moſt men are born with abilities nearly equal; and Mr. Greaves has more reaſon on his ſide than ſome may be aware, when he ſays, "of "two perſons, born to equal fortune, if "one improves his ſtock by induſtry "and traffic, and the other lives idly "upon the principal, the conſequence is "obvious."

Others, by an ignorance of a fine manner, or by a wrong direction long purſued, waſte their talents, on the humbler departments of art, when they have ſufficient genius to excel in the higheſt. This is the caſe among many of our provincial writers, who, with no inconſiderable talents, are placed often in ſituations where they ſtudy authors whoſe taſte is ſurpaſſed by the more modern. We often ſee ingenious writers, who are about half a century removed from the public taſte. Among the painters, Albert Durer may ſerve as an inſtance. Vaſari (quoted by Sir Joſhua Reynolds) juſtly remarked, that he would have probably been one of the firſt painters of his age, had he been initiated into the great principles of the art, ſo well underſtood by his Italian contemporaries. And Sir Joſhua adds, but unluckily having never ſeen or heard of any other manner, he conſidered his own, without doubt, as perfect.

Men of genius are often reverenced only where they are known by their writings. In the romance of life they are divinities, in it's hiſtory they are men. From errors of the mind, and derelictions of the heart, they may not be exempt; theſe are perceived by their acquaintance, who can often diſcern only theſe qualities. The defects of great men are the conſolation of the dunces.

Degrading vices and ſingular follies have diſhonoured men of the higheſt genius. Than others, their paſſions are more efferveſcent, and their reliſh for enjoyment more keen. Genius is a perilous gift of Nature; for it is acknowledged that the ſame materials ſhe employs to form a Cataline and a Cromwell, make a Cicero and a Bacon. Plato, in his viſionary ſketches of a man of genius, lays great ſtreſs on his having the moſt violent paſſions, with reaſon to reſtrain them. Helvetius, an accurate obſerver of men of genius, alſo enforces the idea of their inflammable and phyſidal paſſions. Glory and infamy is the ſame violent paſſion, but the direction is different, and Voltaire has expreſſed this in one verſe,

"Si Je n'etois Ceſar, j'aurois etè Brutus."

Genius, like a ſtorm of wind in Arabia, either directs the myriads of locuſts to the land, or with a friendly influence diſperſes them away.

For their foibles it appears more difficult to account than for their vices; for a violent paſſion depends on it's direction to become either excellence or depravity; but why their exalted mind ſhould not preſerve them from the imbecillities of fools, appears a mere caprice of Nature. A curious liſt might be formed of

> " Fears of the brave and follies of the wiſe."
>
> *Johnſon.*

In the note underneath I have thrown together a few facts which may be paſſed over by thoſe who have no taſte for literary anecdotes.*

But

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* Voiture was the ſon of a vintner, and like our Prior, was ſo mortified whenever reminded of his original occupation, that it was ſaid of him, that wine which cheared the heart of all men, ſickened that of Voiture. Rouſſeau, the poet, was the ſon of a cobler; and when his honeſt parent waited at the door of the theatre, to embrace his ſon on the ſucceſs of his firſt piece, the inhuman poet repulſed the venerable father with inſult and contempt. Akenſide ever conſidered his lameneſs as an unſupportable misfortune, ſince it continually reminded him of his origin, being occaſioned by the fall of a cleaver from one of his father's blocks, a reſpectable butcher. Milton delighted in contemplating his own perſon, and the engraver not having reached our ſublime Bard's " ideal grace," he has pointed his indignation in four iambics. Among the complaints of Pope, is that of " the pictured " ſhape." Even the ſtrong-minded Johnſon would

not

But it is alſo neceſſary to acknowledge, that men of genius are often unjuſtly reproached with foibles. The ſports of a vacant mind, are miſunderſtood as follies. The ſimplicity of truth may appear vanity, and the conſciouſneſs of ſuperiority, envy. Nothing is more uſual than our ſurpriſe at ſome great writer or artiſt contemning the labours of another, whom the public cheriſh with equal approbation. We place it to the account of his envy, but perhaps this opinion is erroneous, and claims a conciſe inveſtigation.

Every ſuperior writer has a MANNER of his own, with which he has long been

conversant,

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not be painted "blinking Sam." Mr. Boſwell tells us that Goldſmith attempted to ſhew his agility to be ſuperior to the dancing of an ape, whoſe praiſe had occaſioned him a fit of jealouſy, but he failed in imitating his rival. The inſcription under Boileau's portrait, deſcribing his character with laviſh panegyric, and a preference to Juvenal and Horace, is unfortunately known to have been written by himſelf.

converſant, and too often inclines to judge of the merit of a performance by the degree it attains of his favourite manner. He errs, becauſe impartial men of taſte are addicted to no manner, but love whatever is exquiſite. We often ſee readers draw their degree of comparative merit from the manner of their favourite author; an author does the ſame; that is, he draws it from himſelf. Such a partial ſtandard of taſte is erroneous; but it is more excuſeable in the author, than in the reader.

This obſervation will ſerve to explain ſeveral curious phenomena in literature. The witty Cowley deſpiſed the natural Chaucer; the claſſical Boileau, the rough ſublimity of Crebillon; the forcible Corneille, the tender Racine; the affected Marivaux, the familiar Moliere; the artificial Gray, the ſimple Shenſtone. Each alike judged by that peculiar manner he had long formed. In a free converſation they might have contemned each other; and a dunce, who had liſtened without taſte or underſtanding, if he had been a haberdaſher in anecdotes, would have haſtened to depoſit in his ware-room of literary falſities, a long declamation on the vanity and envy of theſe great men.

But the charge of vanity has been urged with great appearance of truth againſt authors, for the complacence they experience in their works, and the high admiration of themſelves. An author is pictured as a Narciſſus.

It has long been acknowledged that every work of merit, the more it is examined, the greater the merit will appear. The moſt maſterly touches, and the reſerved graces, which form the pride of the artiſt, are not obſervable till after a familiar and conſtant meditation.

What is moſt refined is leaſt obvious; and to ſome muſt remain unperceived for ever. Churchill, in the opening of his ſecond book of Gotham, juſtly obſerves, that to form the beauties of compoſition,

> "—— few can do, and ſcarcely one,
> "One critic in an age can find when done."

But aſcending from theſe elaborate ſtrokes in compoſition, to the views and deſigns of an author, the more profound and extenſive theſe are, the more they elude the reader's apprehenſion. I refine not too much when I ſay, that the author is conſcious of *beauties*, that *are not in his compoſition*. The happieſt writers are compelled to ſee ſome of their moſt magnificent ideas float along the immenſity of mind, beyond the feeble graſp of expreſſion. Compare the ſtate of the author with that of the reader; how copious and overflowing is the mind of the one to the other; how more ſenſibly alive to a variety of exquiſite ſtrokes which the other has not yet perceived; the author is familiar with every part, and the reader has but a vague notion of the whole. How many noble conceptions of Rouſſeau are not yet maſtered! How many profound reflections of Monteſquieu are not yet underſtood! How many ſubtile leſſons are yet in Locke, which no preceptor can teach!

Such, among others, are the reaſons which may induce an author to expreſs himſelf in language which may ſound like vanity. To be admired, is the noble ſimplicity of the ancients, (imitated by a few elevated minds among the moderns) in expreſſing with ardour the conſciouſneſs of genius. We are not more diſpleaſed with Dryden than with Cicero, when he acquaints us of the great things he has done, and thoſe he purpoſes to do. Modern modeſty might, perhaps, to ſome be more engaging, if it were modeſty; but our artificial bluſhes are like the ladies' temporary rouge, ever ready to colour the face on any occaſion. Some will not place their names to their books, yet prefix it to their advertiſements; others pretend to be the editors of their own works; ſome compliment themſelves in the third perſon; and many, concealed under the ſhade of anonymous criticiſm, form panegyrics, as elaborate and long as Pliny's on Trajan, of their works and themſelves; yet in a converſation, ſtart at a compliment, and quarrel at a quotation. Such modeſt authors reſemble *certain* ladies, who in *public* are equally celebrated for the coldeſt chaſtity.

Conſciouſneſs of merit characteriſes men of genius; but it is to be lamented that the illuſions of ſelf-love, are not diſtinguiſhable

tinguiſhable from the realities of conſciouſneſs.* Yet if we were to take from ſome their pride of exultation, we annihilate the germ of their excellence. The perſuaſion of a juſt poſterity ſmoothed the ſleepleſs pillow, and ſpread a ſunſhine in the ſolitude of Bacon, Monteſquieu, and Newton; of Cervantes, Gray, and Milton. Men of genius anticipate their contemporaries, and know they are ſuch, long before the tardy conſent of the public.

They have alſo been accuſed of the meaneſt adulations; it is certain that many have had the weakneſs to praiſe unworthy men, and ſome the courage to eraſe what they have written. A young writer unknown, yet languiſhing for encouragement, when he firſt finds the notice of a perſon of ſome eminence, has expreſſed himſelf in language which gratitude, a finer reaſon than reaſon itſelf, inſpired. Strongly has Milton expreſſed the ſenſations of this paſſion, “the debt “immenſe of endleſs gratitude.” Who ever pays an “immenſe debt” in ſmall ſums?

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* The following are inſtances. Epicurus wrote to a Miniſter of State, "if you deſire glory, nothing can "beſtow it ſo much as the letters I write to you." Seneca, in quoting theſe words, adds, "what Epi-"curus promiſed to his friend, that my Lucilius I "promiſe you." Theſe were great men. But one La Serre, a French writer of epiſtles, when he addreſſed them, uſed to ſay, "I immortaliſe you, Sir, and "this merits at leaſt your gratitude." How many La Serres might we quote!

Even extravagant applauſes may be excuſed. Every man of genius has left ſuch honourable traces of his private affections; from Locke, whoſe dedication of his immortal treatiſe is more adulative than could be ſuppoſed from a temperate philoſopher, to Churchill, whoſe eulogies on his friends form ſo beautiful a contraſt with the acerbity of his ſatire. As their ſuſceptibility is more ardent, and their penetration keener, than other men, it is not improbable that they often diſcover traits in the characters of thoſe with whom they are familiar, unperceived and unknown to the world. The moſt illuſtrious of the ancients placed the name of ſome friend at the head of their works; we too often prefix the name of ſome patron; but the moſt graceful place is, perhaps, in the midſt of a work, when a man of genius ſhows that he is not leſs mindful of his ſocial affection than his fame.

CHAP. X.

Of Literary Friendſhips and Enmities.

A Delightful topic opens to our contemplation. I enter the ſcene, as Eneas the green Elyſium, where he viewed the once illuſtrious inhabitants of the earth repoſing in ſocial felicity. Among the multitude, a Pythias and Damon are rare; for friendſhip appears too ſerious for the frivolous, and too romantic for the buſy. The mutable paſſions of the frivolous oblige them to forſake thoſe boſoms in which they have repoſited their extinct paſſions; and the varying object of the varying hour requires a new ſet of aſſociates. The buſy ſuffer no intimacies to intrude on their private views; the myſterious magnet of friendſhip is attached only by inviſible atoms of ſympathy, but falls without coheſion, on the ſolidity of gold.

It is honourable to Literature, that among the virtues it inſpires, is that of ardent friendſhip, and it's hiſtory preſents no unfrequent inſtances of it's fineſt enthuſiaſm. The delirium of love is often too violent a paſſion for the ſtudent, and it's caprices are ſtill more incompatible with his purſuits than it's delirium. But friendſhip is not only delightful, but neceſſary to ſoothe a mind alternately elated and depreſſed; when infirm, it ſtrengthens, when dubious, it enlightens, when diſcouraged, it animates.

That however it ſhould be rare in literature, will excite no ſurpriſe. The qualities neceſſary to conſtitute literary friendſhip, compared with thoſe of men of the world, muſt render it's occaſional appearance a ſingularity. Literary friendſhip has no convivial gaieties or factious aſſemblies. Two atoms muſt meet, out of the vaſt maſs of nature, of ſo equal a form that when they once adhere, they ſhall appear as one, and reſiſt the utmoſt force of ſeparation. Their ſtudies muſt be ſimilar, and yet ſo far from becoming rivals, each muſt find reciprocal aſſiſtance; when one of them is at length found to excel, the other is to be the protector of his fame. Each muſt live for the other, decide with one judgment, and feel with one taſte. In this intercourſe of minds, the private paſſions are not to be gratified, but often to be corrected, and an energetic paſſion for ſtudy muſt alone be indulged. In their familiar converſations, learning is communicated without ſtudy, and wit without art. What is given by one is improved by the other; fancy is enriched by memory; and to ſuch converſations the world is indebted for many of it's happieſt productions. The greateſt inconvenience attending ſuch a friendſhip, is to ſurvive the friend; nor are there wanting inſtances in which this has not been ſuffered, and the violence of grief has operated like a voluntary death.

The friendſhips of men of the world are different both in their features and their complections. There we find with facility, men of analogous diſpoſitions; but ſuch intimacies terminate in complaint and contempt. A feeble mind acquires ſtill more imbecillity with the feeble; a diſſolute heart riots in guilt with the diſſolute; and while we deſpiſe our companion, we in return have become deſpicable.

Among the moſt pleaſing effuſions of a man of genius, are thoſe little pieces which he conſecrates to the cauſe of friendſhip; and among his nobleſt actions, are thoſe fervid and ſpontaneous teſtimonies of affection, of which literary hiſtory affords many examples. I ſhall have no recourſe to the abundant inſtances which the ancients have left; the moderns may be inſtructed by the moderns. To notice a few will be ſufficient, and not to notice them, would be refuſing the young reader no ordinary gratification. Such is the memorable friendſhip of Beaumont and Fletcher, that as they have ſo cloſely united their labours that we know not the productions of either; it is with equal difficulty biographers compoſe the memoirs of one, without running into the life of the other. They pourtrayed the ſame characters, while they mingled ſentiment with ſentiment, and their days were not more cloſely interwoven than their verſes. The poem of Cowley, on the death of his friend Harvey, is not, indeed, free from ſome of his remote conceits; yet the following ſtanza preſents a pleaſing picture of the employments of two young ſtudents.

" Say, for you ſaw us ye immortal lights,
" How oft unwearied have we ſpent the nights!
" Till the Ledæan ſtars, ſo famed for love,
" Wond'red at us from above!
" We ſpent them not in toys, in luſt, or wine;
" But ſearch of deep philoſophy,
" Wit, eloquence, and poetry,
" Arts which I loved, for they, my friend, were thine."

Milton has not only given the exquiſite Lycidas to the memory of a young friend, but in his *Epitaphium Damonis*, to that of Deodatus, has poured forth ſome intereſting ſentiments. It has been verſified by Langhorne. Now, ſays the poet,

" To whom ſhall I my hopes and fears impart,
" Or truſt the cares and follies of my heart."

The elegy of Tickel, maliciouſly called by Steele, " proſe in rhime," is alike inſpired by affection and fancy; it has a melodious languor, and a melancholy grace. The ſonnet of Gray, to the memory of Weſt, is a beautiful effuſion, and a model for Engliſh ſonnets. Helvetius was the protector of men of genius, whom he aſſiſted not only with his criticiſm, but his fortune. At his death, M. Saurin read in the French academy, an epiſtle to the manes of his friend. Saurin, wreſtling with obſcurity and poverty, was drawn into literary exiſtence by the ſupporting hand of Helvetius. Our poet thus addreſſes him in the warm tones of gratitude.

" C'eſt toi qui me cherchant au ſein de l'infortune
" Relevas mon ſort abattu,
" Et ſcus me rendre chere, une vie importune.

• • •

" Que importent ces pleurs—
" O douleur impuiſſante ! O regrets ſuperflus !
" Je vis, helas ! Je vis, et mon ami n'eſt plus !"

IMITATED.

" Thy friend, in Miſery's haunts, thy bounties ſeize,
" And give an urgent life, ſome days of eaſe;
" Ah ! ye vain griefs, ſuperfluous tears I chide !
" I live, alas ! I live, and thou haſt died !"

The literary friendſhip of a father with his ſon, is one of the moſt rare alliances in the republic of letters. We have had a remarkable inſtance in the two Richardſons; and the father, in his fine original and warm manner, has employed the moſt glowing language to expreſs his ſentiments on this affection. He ſays, “ my time of learning was employed in “ buſineſs; but after all I have the “ Greek and Latin tongues, becauſe a “ part of me poſſeſſes them, to whom I “ can recur at pleaſure, juſt as I have a “ hand when I would write or paint, feet “ to walk, and eyes to ſee. My ſon is my “ learning, as I am that to him which he “ has not; we make one man, and ſuch “ a compound man may probably pro- “ duce what no ſingle man can.” And further, “ I always think it my peculiar “ happineſs to be as it were enlarged, ex- “ panded, made another man by the

" acquiſition of my ſon, and he thinks " in the ſame manner concerning my " union with him." All this is as curious as it is uncommon.

But it muſt not be ſuppoſed that men of genius have remained ſatisfied with only giving a few verſes to the duties of friendſhip. The elevation of their minds has raiſed them into domeſtic heroes, whoſe actions are often only recorded in the unpubliſhed regiſter of private life. Some for their friend have died, penetrated with inconſolable grief; ſome have ſacrificed their character to his own; ſome have ſhared their limited fortune; and ſome have remained attached to their friend in the worſt ſeaſon of adverſity. In the note underneath I adduce my proofs of what is ſo honourable to literature.*

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* Jurieu denounced Bayle as an impious writer, and drew his teſtimonies from the " Avis aux Refugiés."

I ſhall be conciſe on the ſubject of their enmities; for what could even ingenuity urge

This work is written againſt Calviniſts, and therefore becomes impious in Holland. Bayle might have exculpated himſelf with facility, by declaring the work was compoſed by La Roque; but he preferred to be perſecuted, rather than to ruin his friend; he therefore was ſilent, and condemned.—When the miniſter Fouquet was abandoned by all, it was the men of letters he had patroniſed, who never forſook his priſon; and many have dedicated their works to great men in their adverſity, whom they ſcorned to notice, at the time when they were noticed by all.—The learned Goguet bequeathed his MSS. and library to his friend Fugere, with whom he had united his affections and his ſtudies. His work on the Origin of the Arts and Sciences, had been much indebted to his aid. In vain was the legacy bequeathed; Goguet died of a ſlow and painful diſorder; Fugere, who knew him to be paſt recovery, preſerved a mute deſpair, retired home, and the victim of ſenſibility and friendſhip died, a few weeks after his friend.—The Abbè de Saint Pierre gave an intereſting proof of literary friendſhip. When he was at College, he formed a union with Varignon, the geometrician. They were of congenial diſpoſitions; when he went to Paris, he invited Varignon to accompany him; but Varignon had nothing, and the Abbè was far from rich. A certain income was neceſſary for the tranquil purſuits of geometry. Our Abbè had an income of 1800 livres; from this he deducted 300, which he gave to the geometrician, but accompanied urge to diſtinguiſh literary calumny from any other kind? The reflection ſhould humiliate men of genius, that when they condeſcend to aſperſe with rage and malignity, another artiſt, they are only doing what the worſt part of ſociety can perform, as well as themſelves.

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accompanied by a delicacy which none but a man of genius could conceive. I do not give it you (he ſaid) as a ſalary, but an annuity, that you may be independent, and quit, when you diſlike me. Something nearly ſimilar embelliſhes our own ſcanty literary hiſtory. When Akenſide was in great danger of experiencing famine as well as fame, Mr. Dyſon allowed him three hundred pounds a year. Of this gentleman, perhaps, nothing is known; yet whatever his life may be, it merits the tribute of the biographer; this ſingle action will caſt a luſtre round the meaneſt objects. The *race* of the Dyſons are, no doubt, long extinct; it would be raſh for another Akenſide to look round for another Dyſon. To cloſe with theſe honourable teſtimonies of literary friendſhip, we muſt not omit that of Churchill and Lloyd. It is known that when Lloyd heard of the death of our poet, he acted the part which Fugere did to Goguet. I conclude by remarking that the page is crouded, but my memory is by no means exhauſted.

But reaſon trembles when wit is united with malice, and malice with wantonneſs. Churchill ſays,

"When Reaſon's for me, God is for me too."

But how rarely are ſatiriſts conducted by reaſon! Our laws offer no protection from a bitter epigram, and an artful ſatire. Irony is not denominated by an attorney a libel; by an honeſt man it may be felt as ſomething much worſe. Fortune has been loſt, reputation deſtroyed, and every charity of life been extinguiſhed by witty malice. To debaſe a man in the circle of his acquaintance, if unfortunately his ſenſibility is exquiſite, has not infrequently been committing a leſs crime than murder. The Abbè Caſſagne felt ſo acutely the cauſtic verſe of Boileau, that, in the prime of life, he became melancholy, and died inſane. A modern painter fell the victim of the criticiſm and the wit of a ſatiriſt, who ſhall be nameleſs on this occaſion. Dr. Johnſon related of Cummyns, a celebrated quaker, that he confeſſed he died of an anonymous letter in a public paper, which ſaid, he "faſtened on my heart, and "threw me into this ſlow fever." Some, like Racine, have died of a ſimple rebuke; and ſome by an epigram as well as a ſatire.

CHAP. XI.

The Characters of Writers not diſcoverable in their Writings.

It has long been a cheriſhed notion among men of taſte, that the diſpoſitions of an artiſt appear in his works; and the ſublime Angelo, and the graceful Raphael, are produced as ſplendid Inſtances. It has alſo been a very ancient opinion, that the character of an author is diſcoverable in his writings. The echo from biographers has been conſtant, and often they pourtray the man, by the mirror of his works.* The anecdote which Dr.

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* Ruffhead, in his dull book on Pope, ſays, (p. 8.) "To an accurate obſerver, the temper and morals of "a writer breathe throughout his works." What has been the conſequence of this falſe and popular opinion? He has written a great deal about Pope and Poetry, and, as Johnſon ſaid, he knew as little of one as the other.

Johnſon has given of Thomſon, has ſerved at leaſt to ſuſpect it's fallibility. The ſubject, however, demands inveſtigation, and perhaps may be finally terminated by the facts I now adduce.

We enquire whether he is a moral man who compoſes moral eſſays; incontinent, who writes laſcivious poems; malignant, who publiſhes bitter ſatires; and ſavage, whoſe imagination delights in terror and in blood.

It is one characteriſtic of genius to ſay things for their ingenuity, and to diſplay the felicity of fancy, than from any utility which may be drawn from them. Of many obſcene poets, the greater part have led chaſte lives; and this topic has engaged the acute examination of Bayle. La Mothe le Váier wrote two works of a free nature; yet his life was the unblemiſhed life of a retired ſage. Of many of the ancient poets, it appears that the licentiouſneſs of their verſe, was by no means communicated to their manners. Their page was laſcivious, and their life pure, for the fancy may be debauched, and the heart auſtere.

The licentious tales of La Fontaine are well known, but not a ſingle amour has been recorded of the "bon homme." Bayle is a remarkable inſtance; no writer is more ample in his detail of impurity, but he reſiſted the pollution of the ſenſes as much as Newton. He painted his ſcenes of lewdneſs merely as a faithful hiſtorian, and an exact compiler. Smollet's character is immaculate, yet what a deſcription has he given of one of his heroes with Lord Straddle. I cannot but obſerve on ſuch ſcenes, that their delineation anſwers no good purpoſe. Modeſty cannot read, and is morality intereſted? He aſſumed the character of Petronius Arbiter; we applaud and we cenſure this mere playfulneſs of fancy. It is certain, however, by theſe inſtances, that licentious writers may be very chaſte men.

We now turn to theſe works which, by their caſt, promiſe that the authors were pious and moral men. Two celebrated ancients muſt not be paſſed over in this enumeration, Seneca and Salluſt. The firſt is an admirable ſtoic, elaborate in his delineation of the moral duties; but his eſſays on the advantages of poverty, were written on a table of gold, and his admonitions of ſupporting pain, on voluptuous ſophas, and in fragrant baths. This moral declaimer ruined my county, Eſſex, by the moſt exorbitant uſuries, and inculcated the comforts of poverty with a fortune of ſeven millions. Salluſt elegantly declaims againſt the licentious manners of his age, but we happen to know that he was repeatedly accuſed in the ſenate for public and habitual debaucheries. He inveighs againſt the ſpoilers of countries, yet, when he attained to a remote government, he became a Verres. Lucian, in his early productions, declaims againſt the friendſhips of the great, as another name for ſervitude; when his talents made him known, he accepted a place under the Emperor. He has attempted to apologize for his conduct, by comparing himſelf to thoſe quacks, who, indiſpoſed with a ſevere cough, ſell infallible remedies for it's cure. At the moment the poet Rouſſeau was giving verſions of the pſalms, he was occupied on the moſt infamous epigrams. A living painter, whoſe pictures only repreſent acts of benevolence and charity, is as little generous as he is chaſte.

We have been told that the ſenſibility of Sterne was more that of the author than the man; perhaps thoſe who gave the information were incompetent judges; but I do not find this any more difficult to credit, than a circumſtance which happened to Klopſtock. This votary of Zion's muſe aſtoniſhed and warmed the ſage Bodmer, who ſuppoſing him a poet of an advanced age, and an enthuſiaſt for retirement, invited him to his reſidence; but when the epic poet arrived, he was found no proper aſſociate for the grave profeſſor; he had all the levity and volatility of youth. So very erroneous is the conception often of the form and manners of a diſtant author.

Johnſon would not believe that Horace was a happy man, becauſe his verſes were chearful; no more than he could think Pope was ſo, becauſe he is continually informing us of it. He obſerved that Dr. Young, who pined for preferment, contemns it in his writings. It is ſingular that the ſombrous author of the night thoughts, was the firſt to propoſe a ſubſcription for the balls at Welwyn.* Young was as cheerful in converſation as he was gloomy in his compoſitions, and when a lady expreſſed her ſurpriſe at his ſocial converſe, he replied, "there is much difference be-"tween writing and talking." Are we to credit the good fortune with which ſome poets ſo often felicitate themſelves, any more than their deſpondence and menaces? Thomſon paints the ſcenes of domeſtic love with all the ſplendid decorations of fancy, but knew nothing of it's reality but a caſual and groſs indulgence.

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* This anecdote is from Mr. Pye's commentary on the poetic of Ariſtotle. This work has great claims on the attention of the critical reader. It is not as it's title would ſeem to import, an arid pedantic and metaphyſical diſſertation, but elegant, amuſing, and uſeful criticiſm.

Inconſtant men will write on conſtancy, and licentious minds will elevate themſelves into poetry and religion. Moral men will venture to write what they would not act, while others of inferior honeſty will act what they will not venture to write.

To prove that the writings of an author give no indication of his perſonal character, we have inſtances ſo multifarious, that to bring them forward might weary the moſt patient curioſity. I conſult my intereſt, by repreſſing the deſire of diſplaying my detections.

It is neceſſary, however, to adduce a few, that the reader may not flatter himſelf that he has diſcovered the diſpoſitions of an author, either by his ſtyle, his mode of thinking, or any other literary appearance he may aſſume. Balzac and Voiture are ſo well known, that I prefer them to ſhew the illuſions of ſtyle.

The letters of the firſt are pompous and inflated; but his converſation was light and agreeable. Voiture, who affected gaiety and gracefulneſs in his compoſitions, was in his domeſtic language, harſh and ſtiff, for having frequented the nobility, he ever aſſumed the Seigneur.* Writers of great genius have felt themſelves in awkward ſituations, when the extraordinary ſentiments they make their dramatis perſonæ utter, are maliciouſly applied to their own character. An enemy of Shakeſpeare, might have reproached him with his forcible delineation of the villain Iago. Crebillon, indeed, complains in the preface to one of his tragedies, of ſomething ſimilar. He ſays, "they charge me with all the

"iniquities

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[*] The comedies of M. de St. Foix are light, agreeable, and delicate; his own character was remarkable for moroſeneſs, rudeneſs, and inſociability. Moliere, ſo gay and ſpirited in his comedy, was grave and penſive in ſociety.

"iniquities of Atreus; and they regard "me, in ſome places, as a wretch with "whom it is unfit to aſſociate; as if all "which the mind invents, muſt be de-"rived from the heart." Our poet is, indeed, a ſtriking inſtance of the little alliance between the literary and perſonal diſpoſitions of an author. In his Atreus, the father drinks the blood of his ſon; in Rhadamiſtus, the ſon expires by the hand of the father; and in his Electra, the ſon aſſaſſinates his mother: yet was Crebillon the gentleſt and moſt amiable of men, and who exulted on his entrance into the French academy, that he had never tinged his pen with the gall of ſatire. The impiety of Satan, might equally be attributed to the poet; and Dr. Moore might be ſuppoſed the worſt of men, by his forcible delineation of Zeluco. A poet is a painter of the ſoul; if he ſeizes it's deformities, he is a great artiſt, but not therefore a bad man.

I ſpare the reader a number of inſtances that croud on the memory, and ſhall give only a few reflections which offer themſelves. One may diſplay with artful elegance, the moral brilliancy of the mind, and with ſtrokes of ſentiment, intereſt the heart by an animated eloquence. But this may proceed from a felicity of manner, and a flexible, verſatile, and happy genius. The writer's heart may be as little penetrated by the charms and virtues he deſcribes, as the tragic poet would be incapable of committing the aſſaſſinations and maſſacres he commands in a verſe, or details in a ſcene.

Montagne appears to have been ſenſible of this fact in the literary character. Of authors, he ſays, that he likes to read their little anecdotes and private paſſions, and adds, "Car j'ai une ſinguliére curioſité de connoitre l'ame et les naifs

" jugemens de mes auteurs. Il faut bien " juger leur ſuffiſance, mais non pas leurs " moeurs, ni eux, par cette montre de " leurs ecrits qu'ils etalent au theatre du " monde."* This is very juſt; and I am not yet perſuaded that the ſimplicity of this old and admirable favourite of Europe might not have been a theatrical geſture, as much as the ſenſibility of Sterne.

I conclude by obſerving, that if we conſider that he who paints vice with energy is therefore vicious, we may injure an honeſt man; and if we imagine that he who celebrates virtue is therefore virtuous, we may happen to deceive ourſelves in repoſing on a polluted heart.

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* "For I have a ſingular curioſity to know the ſoul, and ſimple opinions of my authors. We muſt judge of their ability, but not of their manners, nor themſelves, by that ſhew of their writings which they diſplay on the theatre of the world."

CHAP. XII.

Of ſome private Advantages, which induce Men of Letters to become Authors.

SOME private intereſt enters into his view who aſſumes the profeſſion of an author. Such a motive fortunately exiſts; for no reaſoning man would voluntarily place himſelf in a ſituation, fraught with burning anxieties, and with ſickening diſguſts; with hope mingling with deſpondence; with felicity ſo variable, that the utmoſt happineſs of an author is as tranſient and rare, as thoſe fine Italian ſkies we ſometimes ſee in our unſettled climate.

Many are the motives which induce to become authors; their motives, like their misfortunes, are peculiar to themſelves; but the utility they produce appertains to the public.

Some enter the perilous and brilliant career of letters, as the only means of diſtinguiſhing their abilities, and meriting public eſteem. To any other purſuit, their ſituation, or their diſpoſitions, may be incompatible. The reſtleſs activity of genius torments their repoſe; and they feel like a young Columbus, confined to a petty port. Theſe are men to whom glory becomes a kind of aliment, deprived of which, their paſſions, like a concealed fire, would ſecretly conſume the frail machine of humanity. For ſuch, it is as impoſſible to remain ſilent, as it is for ſome to be eloquent. They give a voice to their feelings in their works.

Others become authors, as the only relief they find from the tædium of life. Helvetius has maintained the ſingular paradox, that *Ennui* produced many of our ſuperior writers. Several authors have invented their works, as ſo many ſchemes to eſcape from the preſſure of life. It was an aſſertion drawn, perhaps, from his own feelings. A financier, luxuriating in ſplendid opulence, courted by each ſeductive form of voluptuouſneſs, already acknowledged as an elegant writer and a liberal Mecenas, could only have been induced by this motive to encounter the cloſe meditation, the laborious arrangement, and the elaborate elegance of a work which he reſolved ſhould be poſthumous. It is to *Ennui* we owe that numerous race of opulent ſcribblers, who after reiterated ill ſucceſs, ſtill pour their plenteous volumes on a wearied and incurious public. Marolles perſiſted to the laſt in his uninterrupted amuſement of printing books, and his readers having long ceaſed, he was compelled to preſent them to his friends, who, however, were not his readers. There are many writers who paſs their days in amazing labours, and are veterans without being known as volunteers. Of ſome, a private preſs is the literary horizon; compoſition preſerves their mind from what a French writer pleaſantly calls "the horrors of "digeſtion." It is well if they would only take their phyſic in private. Theſe are the Shakeſpeares whoſe plays have been refuſed, and the Addiſons whoſe ſpectators have never been read.

Others follow the avocations of an author as a means of ſubſiſting on the produce of virtuous talents; their moderate and precarious exiſtence is more honourable than a ducal revenue, and more precious than a contractor's loan. When we know that ſuch a writer has never violated the dignity of human nature, but has rigidly reverenced virtue, and an elevation of ſoul has taught him to repel the inſulting familiarity of the great, his works receive a new and accidental value. We purſue our meditations with confidence, and we dwell on thoſe fervid ſtrokes which are the natural expreſſions of a great genius, wreſtling with a heavy and oppreſſive fortune.

Literature is, indeed, the only refuge for genius, placed in obſcure ſituations. It is an avenue to glory, open for thoſe ingenious men, who, deprived of honours or of wealth, may by their meditations, ſometimes obtain both; or if they do not obtain either, may be rendered ſuperior to them. To many young writers the idea may be conſolatory and animating, that the greater part of our firſt authors have ennobled themſelves, and owed nothing to their parents. The great Grecian orator, was the ſon of a ſmith; the prince of Latin poets, of a potter; the fineſt ſatiriſt and ode writer of antiquity, of a franchiſed man; the brilliant Flechier, of a tallow chandler; the eloquent Maſſillon, of a tanner; and the philoſophers Rouſſeau and Diderot, of a watch-maker and a cutler; in England, the moſt nervous of moral eſſayiſts, was the ſon of one who kept a book ſtall; the author of the Pleaſures of Imagination, was the ſon of a butcher; and the greater author of the American Revolution, of a tallow chandler.

Genius has the prerogative of raiſing the inferior ranks of men to the higher claſſes of ſociety. This once obtained, the age is juſt; and the higher claſſes become inferior.

We muſt not paſs over in ſilence, advantages better known, attending the occupations of literary men. Thoſe derived from ſtudious habits, would be ſufficient to attach the elegant mind to literature, if reaſon had much power over the paſſions; the attraction is irreſiſtible, when reaſon itſelf becomes a paſſion.

The pleaſures of literature have long been a favourite amplification of eloquence; and I quote not the admirable reflections or of Cicero, or of Pliny, familiar to every man of taſte. He who conſecrates himſelf to letters, eſcapes from the reſtleſs deſires of the multitude. The mephitic air of vulgar paſſions cannot reach him; as, we are informed of the pernicious vapour of the lake of the dogs in Italy, that if a perſon does not bend downwards, it cannot affect him. Is he opulent? he has ſufficient firmneſs to remain enamoured of literary labour. Is he poor? he has ſufficient intrepidity to become illuſtrious. The firſt effect of a love of letters communicates virtue and independence; for he has ſilenced many private paſſions, and inhabits the interior, not the ſuperficies of his ſoul.

It is a curious obſervation of one Martinelli, an Italian, who, to prove that Study ſoftens the manners, ſays, that rarely men of letters are aſſaſſins in Italy, duelliſts in France, or ſuicides in England. It is true we want not the opinion of Martinelli, becauſe it has been elegantly ſaid by Horace, repeated by the thinking Hume, and is to be found in every book of rhetoric, in the firſt chapter.

Literature is the only conſolation in thoſe terrible afflictions, when we are reduced by the privation of a ſenſe, to take our laſt refuge under the domeſtic roof. Blindneſs itſelf is no impediment to genius; fatal to all, it is an advantage to an active imagination. It's powers collect more forcibly and burn more intenſely. It is poſſible to form a catalogue of men of learning who have projected and finiſhed conſiderable works in this ſituation. Often, too, has the gate of the priſon been the porch of fame, and a ſlight indiſpoſition conferred immortality. A man of letters can never be ſaid to be exiled or impriſoned.

It is even to be ſuppoſed, againſt the popular opinion, that ſtudy is friendly to the conſtitution. A life of letters is calm and uniform, and cheriſhes the mild affections. An author, if he feels not too ſenſibly an occaſional diſappointment, and can forgive the malice of an enemy, finds his ſtudies produce a happy influence over his health. Hourly acquiſitions bring new delights, and thought from thought is purſued with tranquillity; and delight and tranquillity are medicines to the ſoul, and promoters of health. Every production of taſte reſpires a ſoftening balm, which ſweetens that continuity of attention only experienced by men of ſtudy. If an anatomiſt could deſcribe accurately the ſenſations of a man of taſte, and explain this placable and harmonious play of the nerves, no ſtate of exiſtence might, perhaps, be found more friendly to the human frame. Every one in the habits of ſtudy has perceived the influence of the mind over the body; and Addiſon has noticed the pleaſures of the imagination as conducive to health.* The greater number of eminent writers have attained to an advanced age. In an eſſay by Dr. Ruſhworth, a number of ages of great ſtudents are collected, and his opinion is confirmed by ſufficient teſtimonies. Bayle ſtill proceeds further, by ſaying, that ſtudy is not hurtful to the conſtitution even in early youth. Shenſtone has, however, echoed in one of his elegies, the vulgar opinion,

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* On this ſubject the following anecdote is curious. Alphonſo of Arragon, was a prince paſſionately enamoured of literature. When he lay much indiſpoſed, and could find no relief from his phyſicians, his courtiers brought whatever preſents they imagined might amuſe

"But ſoon the paths of health and and fame divide."

If by the path of fame, our amiable writer meant ſtudy, his ill health was never occaſioned by profound learning.

Some, perhaps, will not deem as one of the inferior advantages of an author, that of his admiſſion among the higher circles. If in the preſent age, no writer can

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amuſe him; Panormita judged proper to preſent him with books, among which was a Quintus Curtius, which appears to have had a wonderful effect over the ſtudious Alphonſo. He heard with ſuch delight, the Hiſtory of Alexander the Great, that after the firſt day he felt himſelf relieved, and before the concluſion of the work, aſtoniſhed his phyſicians, by a perfect recovery. He ever afterwards contemned the doctors and their Hippocrates and Avicenna, and ſaid he required no other medicine while he poſſeſſed Quintus Curtius. *Valeant Hippocrates, Avicena, et Medici cæteri, Vivat Curtius ſoſpitator meus.*

can reaſonably hope that his ſtudies will open the golden gate of preferment, or of fortune, he may at leaſt, when he attains to eminence, be certain of receiving the tribute which opulent vanity pays to his talents. But an author is little indebted to ſuch notice; the attentions of a brilliant circle are ill-timed; it is, perhaps, twenty years too late. It is alſo to be obſerved, that few men of taſte can accuſtom themſelves to the refinements of opulent grandeur, without creating artificial wants, which they can never gratify; and their future life may feel the irritation of pleaſures not to be purchaſed, and elegance not to be found. To ſuch may often be applied the exclamation of Milton's Adam, when obliged to exile himſelf from paradiſe—

> —— How ſhall I breathe in other air
> Leſs pure, accuſtomed to immortal fruits?

The ſociety of the great is little flattering; for it requires a painful vigilance to preſerve dignity with ſuch aſſociates. D'Alembert has written an admired eſſay on the connection between literary men, and theſe men. A man of letters who had the misfortune of living with a lord, finely ſaid of him, "he would familiariſe "himſelf with me; but I repel him re- "ſpectfully." An anecdote related of Piron is not leſs intereſting. This man of genius had formed the moſt elevated notion of the dignity of a man of letters; nor would ſuffer the literary character to be lowered in his preſence. Entering the apartment of a nobleman, who was conducting another peer to the ſtairs, the noble ſtopped to make way for Piron, paſs on, my lord, ſaid the noble maſter, paſs, he is only a poet.—Piron replied, "ſince our qualities are declared, I ſhall "take my rank," and he placed himſelf before the lord.

If the voice of an individual can weigh with an author, it is when it ſpeaks in a foreign accent. The enquiry of an intelligent foreigner ſounds like the diſtant plaudit of poſterity. Fontenelle was never more gratified than when a Swede, arriving at the gates of Paris, enquired of the officers of the cuſtoms where Fontenelle reſided, and expreſſed his indignation that none of them ſhould have ever heard of his name.

There are ſome hours in the life of a man of genius, which, it may be ſuppoſed, communicate an exquiſite ſenſation to his feelings. It is when he perceives the world ſpontaneouſly pay their tribute of reſpect to his abilities. It is ſaid of Corneille, that he had his particular ſeat in the theatre, and that when he entered, the audience roſe to ſalute him. We know what exceſs of honours was paid (the expreſſion will be

pardoned

pardoned by men of taſte) to the matchleſs Voltaire. Spinoſa, while he gained a humble livelihood by grinding glaſſes at an obſcure village in Holland, was viſited by the firſt general in Europe, who, for this conference, ſuſpended the march of his army, and traverſed a diſtant province. Rouſſeau attracted a croud as he paſſed the ſtreets; and the people followed him with tears of affection, as the apoſtles of genius and humanity. Lavater, receives daily the tribute of poſterity in the perſonal admiration of every traveller of ſenſibility and taſte. Such are the voluntary honours of the human heart; honours which no monarch can receive, unleſs he is that ſingular monarch—a man of letters on the throne.

I obſerve that this chapter on the advantages of men of genius, is ſhort, and that it was with much trouble I could even give it this amplification.

CHAP.

CHAP. XIII.

Of the Utility of Authors to Individuals.

WE have reaſon to believe, that wherever authors are virtuous and free, their nation partakes moſt of virtue and of freedom; as on the contrary, where they are diſſolute and enſlaved, their nation have as little morals as liberty. We want a diſſertation on the influence of manners on taſte, and of taſte on manners. Sir Joſhua Reynolds, in one of his diſcourſes, obſerves, that "in the "ornaments of the arts we find the cha-"racteriſtical mark of a national taſte, "as by throwing up a feather, we know "which way the wind blows, better than "by a more heavy matter."

The morals of a nation are oftener directed by authors, than by thoſe modern apoſtles who poſſeſs vaſt incomes, and ſtolen ſermons. Authors are the preachers of morality, and the arbiters of manners. They perform the office of the *Cenſor Morum*; and if they do not always live like the Catos of their age, their works may effect the ſame beneficial influence; for, like the language of Cato, they are ſo many reprimands for folly, and remonſtrances for vice.

An author ſometimes appears, who gives a new direction to the national character. In mechanics, no impulſion, from a ſingle hand, can communicate to a body the force of eternal movement. In morals it is different; for there an individual power can for ever endow with action the TRUTH it impels. Theſe are the few authors who form revolutions, not, perhaps, in the ſublime ſciences, which are reſerved for the contemplation of a few, but in that happier knowledge which is of daily uſe, and addreſſed to thoſe who moſt want inſtruction. Theſe authors are not a Newton and a Locke; but an Addiſon and a Fontenelle. Theſe two eminent writers ſhall illuſtrate this reflection. The Spectators introduced literature and morals in the nation; the young, the gay, and the fair, who flew from the terrific form of a folio, were attracted by the light graces of a fugitive page. Since that happy moment the diffuſion of taſte, and the curioſity of knowledge, have produced readers who are now enabled to diſcern the ſhades of elegance; to appreciate compoſitions of genius; and to adjuſt the merits of ingenious competitors by the ſcale of philoſophical taſte. We have become a reading, and of courſe a critical nation. A refined writer is now certain of finding readers who can comprehend him. Of all our great men, whatever department they have illuſtrated, who has left to the nation a more valuable inheritance than Addiſon? Thouſands hear the name of Marlborough, but the battle of Blenheim leaves no impreſſion. The name of Addiſon excites affection; and his Spectators remind the modeſt reader where he firſt gained inſtruction, and the great writer where he firſt felt the influence of taſte, and where he ſtill learns the art of compoſition.

Fontenelle operated the ſame kind of revolution in France. Before his brilliant wit and exact ſcience were united, learning was the ſolitary enjoyment of the learned. Aſtronomy and erudition were reſerved for the aſtronomer and the erudit. Each ſpoke his own language; Fontenelle was their interpreter. He explained vaſt totalities by gradual deductions, and ſublime conceptions, by familiar ideas. The lady at her toilette deſcribed the motions of a heavenly body, while ſhe was regulating her own; and the beau monde had a finer penetration into the nature of oracles, than the pedant Van Dale, who had written ſo copiouſly, and whom no one could read.

These are the valued authors who delight and ſoothe their fellow-citizens; the benefactors of every man. A mind happily diſpoſed imbibes their felicity of character. We read, among the Perſian fables of Sadi, of a ſwimmer, who, having found a piece of common earth, was aſtoniſhed at it's fragrance, and enquired if it were muſk or amber? "No," replied the perfumed mould, "I am nothing but common earth; but roſes were planted on my ſoil, and their odorous virtues have deliciouſly penetrated through all my pores. I have retained the infuſion of ſweetneſs; I had otherwiſe been but common earth."—Sadi ingeniouſly applies this poetical incident to the effect his miſtreſs produces over him. We may alſo apply it to an eſſay of Addiſon, or a dialogue of Fontenelle, which, like the roſes on the common earth, impregnate with intellectual ſweetneſs an uncultivated mind.

Thoſe who feel with enthuſiaſm the eloquence of a fine writer, inſenſibly receive ſome particles from it; a virtuous writer communicates virtue; a refined writer, a ſubtile delicacy; a ſublime writer, an elevation of ſentiment. All theſe characters of the mind, in a few years, are diffuſed throughout the nation. Among us, what acute reaſoners has the refined penetration of Hume formed; what amenity of manners has not Addiſon introduced; to how many virtuous youths have not the moral eſſays of Johnſon imparted fortitude, and illumined with reflection?

It is preſumed, that while they thus powerfully operate on the *minds* of their *readers*, their *own minds*, in the practice of their ſtudies, are influenced in a ſimilar manner. One of the moſt pleaſing paſſages in the platonic Shafteſbury, is to this purpoſe; and though we have already proved it, not exactly conformable to facts, it is not entirely a brilliant reverie. Our noble author, comparing the writer with the ſculptor and the painter, ſays, that "there is this eſſential difference between the artiſts of each kind; "that they who deſign merely after "*bodies*, and form the graces of this ſort, "can never, with all their accuracy, or "correctneſs of deſign, be able to reform "themſelves, or grow a jot more ſhapely "in their perſons. But for thoſe artiſts, "who copy from another life, who ſtudy "the graces and perfections of *minds*, "and are real maſters of thoſe rules which "conſtitute this latter ſcience, 'tis impoſſible they ſhould fail of being themſelves *improved* and *amended* in their "better part." That delightful enthuſiaſt Richardſon the father, in one of his fine dreams, inſiſts (as others indeed have done) that great virtue is neceſſary even for painters; and that genius has been leſs or greater, as virtue and vice prevailed in the mind of the artiſt. When we read an amiable compoſition, and obſerve the character of the author to be the reverſe, there appears an indecent oppoſition, which revolts our ſenſibility, and makes us contemn the writer as a miſerable impoſtor.

This ſcience of the mind, noticed by Shafteſbury, is not metaphyſics, but what has been happily called "the "proper ſtudy of mankind;" Man acting in ſociety. The philoſophic genius excels in the ſtudy of the world; he derives this advantage from the obſcurity of his ſituation, the verſatility of his mind, and the habit of meditation. Thoſe whoſe *chief occupation* is not *reflection*, limit the knowledge of human nature to the particular ſociety they are accuſtomed. A courtier, a lawyer, and a merchant, contemplate the human heart, in different lights; but nature is ill underſtood by thoſe whoſe capacities are habituated to detect one principle among many. She has no character, but many characters; ſhe is not to be ſyſtematized, but to be purſued. The man of genius acts upon more general principles; and makes the human heart his amuſement and his occupation. The theatre, conducted by ſuch writers, would become a national ſchool; but we muſt then have fewer pantomimes, and ſuch operas and comedies as we have now, ſtill fewer than pantomimes.

The philoſophical traveller enters no town but he feels the regards of a citizen, and views no ſpot of earth on which the ſame ſun does not ſhine, and the ſame affections kindle! As he gazes from the Alps, on the regions beneath, his eye ſuffuſed with tears of pleaſure and humanity, he exclaims,

"Creation's heir! the world, the world is mine."

Goldſmith.

CHAP.

CHAP. XIV.

Of the political Influence of Authors.

OPINION, ſays Sophocles, is ſtronger than Truth; Opinion is the ſovereign of man; and authors, who are the propagators of her decrees, are ſome of the moſt important perſons in ſociety, and may be called the miniſters of ſtate to Opinion.

An author has the ſingular prerogative of uniting in himſelf the powers that are portioned among the higher orders of ſociety. This reflection may appear fanciful to thoſe who are deſtitute of fancy; and extravagant to thoſe who conſider paper and pens as the compoſition of the manufacturer, and who ſee nothing in them but rags and feathers.

An eloquent author, who writes in the immutable language of truth, will one day be ſuperior to every power in the ſtate. His influence is active, though hidden; every truth is an acorn which is laid in the earth, and which often the longer it takes to riſe, the more vigorous and magnificent will be it's maturity. What has been long meditated in the ſilence of the ſtudy, will one day reſound in the aweful voice of public opinion. The chief magiſtrate can command; the ſenator can perſuade; the judge can decide; the ſoldier can conquer. A great author obtains theſe various purpoſes at once by his ſolitary labours. His truths command; his eloquence perſuades; his reaſon decides; and his works inſpire a rival nation with a more enduring reſpect, than even a victorious army.

An iſland, once inconſiderable in Europe, now ranks among the firſt powers, arbitrates among other nations, and the very title of it's inhabitants enſures reſpect.

ſpecie. Is this owing, alone, to her commercial proſperity and military force? One nation has the moſt flouriſhing mart of trade, and another is one of the moſt martial people; yet neither inſpire mankind with veneration or affection. To themſelves is confined their rude language; ſtudied, perhaps, by merchants, and corrupted as it is ſtudied. It is more by an interchange of opinions, than of ſpices and ſpecie, that a nation is eſteemed.

Not thus with England; for ſhe derives her ſplendour from her writers, as well as her ſoldiers, and her navigators. An empire merely founded on force, is ſurrounded by enemies, and often it's ſincereſt enemies are to be found in it's own unparental boſom. An empire diſtinguiſhed by it's literature, conceals it's martial iron under the ſweeteſt flowers; extends her conqueſts, and diffuſes her pleaſures, and among hoſtile foreigners, acquires new friends.

This truth we ourſelves have experienced. France preceded us in the ſtudies of humanity, and her polite literature more forcibly operated on the world, than even her armies and her fleets; her civility and refinement vanquiſhed, when theſe were defeated. At that period in ſociety, when the intellectual taſtes of men become ſo many wants, theſe gave an univerſal diffuſion to her language. The nation that ſupplies a harveſt for this appetency of the mind, extends it's dominions in the hearts of the ſubjects of other powers. Thus Pope, with equal ſagacity and taſte, writes

"We conquered France, but felt our captive's charms,
"Her arts victorious triumphed o'er our arms."

Let us now contemplate the reverſe of the medal; and the reverſe is more beautiful than the face. In the middle of the laſt century, our manners were as unknown as our language; and neither were yet formed and poliſhed. We were nearly regarded as valorous barbarians, partaking of the glooms of our climate; and whom nature had benevolently ſeparated from neighbours more poliſhed, and alſo more ſerene. We now hold to Europe models of ſolid ſenſe and profound reaſoning. Our late admired writers have made a neglected language the ſtudy of reflecting foreigners; they calmed the national hatred of France, and compelled even our rivals inceſſantly to celebrate our merits, when, unlike themſelves, we condeſcended not to exult, but to perform our labours with a modeſt ſilence. Before our preſent unhappy diſſentions, it was our nation they ſighed to emulate; and the firſt writers of France paſſed into England to learn to think and write; or thought and wrote like Engliſhmen in France, undiſmayed by the terrors of a corrupted government. From our hands they received the germs of reflection, and the flower of liberty. This ſingular revolution in the human mind was produced not by our merchants or our admirals, but by our Lockes, our Popes, and our Addiſons. They have ſubjugated the minds of millions by the energy of an intellectual ſovereignty. The works of Engliſh authors are now printed at foreign preſſes, and this at leaſt as much as the commerce and the force of England, proves the aſcendancy of her genius.

The utility of men of letters to national purpoſes is not attended to by every ſtateſman; for few ſtateſmen (like other men in office) are either worthy of, or competent to their employments. The author is conſidered by the great as a ſubordinate character in ſociety; as if the art of inſtructing men, the art of a Socrates, was much inferior to that of governing them, the art, often of a Nero, or a Sardanapalus, and according to Machiavel, of a Ceſar Borgia.

Political theoriſts, however, appear to conſider the worſt actions of men, as of far leſs conſequence than the propagation of their opinions. A dangerous man may infect his neighbours, but the dangerous writer ſpreads a contagion throughout a nation. Books, and ſometimes their authors, have been burnt; but even this mode of criticiſm was found ineffectual. The flame which deſtroyed an individual, ever enlightened a people; and the burning of books, has not yet been conſidered as their refutation.

If thoſe who adminiſter the public duties of government, were more cloſely allied with men of letters, the union would be happy for the people, and uſeful to both. It is unfortunate that thoſe who govern are not always the most enlightened.*

Authors ſtand between the governors and the governed; and they who practice the art of arranging their thoughts, and of agitating the paſſions, who at once penetrate by their reaſon, and inflame by their eloquence, are, amongſt the nations of modern Europe, what the celebrated orators of ancient Rome and Athens were amongſt the aſſemblies of citizens. They awaken, they terrify, they excite, they conduct the people.

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* The attic Harris of Saliſbury, in his "Philoſophi-"cal Arrangements," has touched on this topic, and [illegible] to confirm his judicious reflections. He has ſhewn, "that ſome of the moſt il-"luſtrious actors upon the great theatre of the world, "have been engaged in philoſophical ſpeculations." But what is more to our purpoſe, we may obſerve that ſome of the greateſt ſtateſmen have attached themſelves to a philoſopher. Pericles had his Anaxagoras; Scipio his Polybius; Ceſar and Pompey, their Ariſto and Cratippus; Zenobia her Longinus; and Plutarch ſaid of Alexander, "that he marched againſt the Perſians "with better ſupplies from his preceptor Ariſtotle, "than from his father Philip."

It is alſo very certain, that the philoſophical is not incompatible with the political character. Sir Walter Raleigh; the De Witts; Thuanus; Grotius; Sir William Temple, Bolingbroke, &c. are ſufficient to name. Literary men may become miniſters of ſtate, but it is more difficult for miniſters of ſtate to become literary men.

Miniſters are conſtrained to watch till vigilance is exhauſted, and ſolicitude ſleeps amidſt the fluctuations of the public mind, and this public mind is the creation of the philoſophical writer. Is it to be doubted, that ſince the immortal labour of Monteſquieu, the old ſyſtems of government have been often changed? It is certain the minds of the people have. Cromwell, the penetrating Cromwell, was juſtly alarmed when he ſaw the Oceana of Harrington, and ſeems to have dreaded the terrible effects of a little volume, much more than the plots of the royaliſts. The ſingle thought

of

of a man of genius has ſometimes changed the diſpoſitions of a people, and even of an age.* With every creative genius that ariſes, a new day riſes with him; it was Monteſquieu that introduced in his nation a taſte for the ſolid and profound, as well as the gayer and lighter ſtudies.

Wherever the liberty of the preſs is eſtabliſhed, authors form as powerful a claſs in ſociety, as the higheſt. For the great, nothing remains but to annihilate the preſs, or to reſpect the authors. In Rome, a Perſius may have been compelled to diſguiſe the name of a Nero, but in England, the name of a tyrant will be hitched in rhime. Authors are moſt to be dreaded in that country where the liberty and licentiouſneſs of the preſs, become a mere matter of ſentiment, and not of diſcuſſion; and this ſentiment is left to the people. We who enjoy the freedom of the preſs in it's extreme degree, have no reaſon to complain of any privileges of the great.

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* The great Frederick in his Examen of the Prince of Machiavel, obſerving that the minds of men are very different from the ferocious age of that Italian politician, ſays, "for which we are obliged to the "WRITINGS OF THOSE LEARNED MEN, WHO HAVE "have contributed ſo much to poliſh and civilize "EUROPE."

The people conſider authors as their property; and not unjuſtly, ſince the great ſuffer them to depend on the people. The public are never ſlow to unite with authors, who, for the ſake of preſerving equality, muſt continually humble the great. The public, as patrons, are the moſt munificent; as abettors, the moſt formidable. Their favour is equitably obtained; they expect an author to be the bold interpreter of their ſecret ſentiments, and the protector of their liberties, as well as the artiſt of their pleaſures. If this author is perſecuted, he is never forſaken; his cauſe becomes the cauſe of the people; but if he ſhould prove a wretched adventurer, who artfully ſeized on an occaſion to ſerve his private views, the author is juſtly neglected, and the cauſe alone purſued. We live in an age, in which an honeſt man begins to know his value; and obſcurity and poverty, if adorned with integrity and philoſophy, are not injurious to the opinion of a great mind. We conſider that perſonal merit, is ſuperior to perſonal honour; becauſe it now includes perſonal honour. The contrary will not hold, nor has this always been ſo.

The public are not diſpleaſed when the great become the patrons of their eminent authors; it is a kind of homage paid to the ſentiments of the people. But the author may be a conſiderable loſer, if he values fame, more than he does a penſion.

It is curious to obſerve the ſolitary man of letters in the concealment of his obſcure ſtudy, ſeparated from the croud, unknown to his contemporaries, collecting the materials of inſtruction from every age and every country; combining with the preſent the example of the paſt, and the prediction of the future; pouring forth the valuable ſecrets of his meditations to poſterity; ſtriking with the concuſſion of new light the public mind; and forming the manners, the opinions, the refinement, and the morals of his fellow-citizens.—It is curious, I ſay, to obſerve ſuch a man, by ſome contemned, by others hated; by ſome degraded to an idler or an outcaſt, and by others raiſed to a fancied monſter; a Briareus extending a hundred arms, and in every arm a brand of ſedition; an Argus opening a hundred eyes, and tracing the vermin of corruption, creeping to their moſt hidden receſſes; in a word, as aweful a figure as that of the vaſt mountain, to which the caprice of a tyrant attempted to give a Coloſſal form, by commanding the people to hew it to his immoderate fancy.

But the philoſopher is not, as of late, too often repreſented this Coloſſal iniquity. Legal authority is moſt ſecure when the people are moſt enlightened; a ſimple truth, which I leave to profound politicians to explain. I ſhall only cite the ſentiment of an old poet.

"—— De la majeſtè des Loix,
"Appuyant les pouvoirs ſupremes,
"Fait demeurer les diademes
"Fermes ſur la tète des Rois."

MALHERBE.

It is a dreadful moment when the people and the great alike refuſe the inſtructions of the philoſopher; whenever he appears terrible, ſome great corruption pervades the ſtate; for he is only armed with truth. The occupations of the philoſophical ſtudent, as connected with political ſpeculations, are therefore duties of an exalted nature; ſome muſt give their hands, ſome their blood, and ſome their hours, to the various duties their country exacts; but there is a ſmall portion of men, who appear marked out by nature, for the purpoſe of cultivating their thoughts in peace, and to give activity to their ſentiments by diſcloſing them to the people. The phyſiognomy of their minds, wears all that ſhining luſtre, which diſtinguiſhed the prophet after his immediate conference with the Divinity; for in their compoſitions, good ſenſe is embelliſhed by eloquence, and before they perſuade, they convince. None, but thoſe who devote a life to meditation, can effect theſe great purpoſes; for they who govern a people, cannot at the ſame time enlighten them.

Legiſlators of extenſive views, have ever protected and honoured men of letters. We have ſeen, in this age, two great powers in Europe teſtify their public utility, and who have been as ſolicitous to aſſemble philoſophers, as to form their armies. Pruſſia and Ruſſia, under the government of two great ſovereigns, have ſhewn how far by their aid an obſcure principality, and hordes of barbarians, may be elevated in the ſcale of humanity. The great Frederick invited to his court the perſecuted and unhappy literati; and to this holy ſhrine of philoſophy reſorted many a literary pilgrim. The imperial Catharine has not only largely penſioned ſeveral illuſtrious writers, but honours and animates, by her gifts, the attempt of every philoſopher who produces a public utility. If theſe ſovereigns have diſplayed more art than humanity, in forging chains for the free-of men; it ſhews that an Antoninus and an Alfred, are more rare than a Frederick and a Catharine, as the love of philoſophy is leſs difficult than practical philoſophy; the only philoſophy that merits the name.

It is the philoſophical writer who alone reflects on what is not done, and on what may be done. He goads the ſluggiſh veins of government, when a cold indolence ſpreads a torpor on it's unhealthful inactivity. He teaches philanthropy to direct it's bounties in proper channels, and this is no inconſiderable good; for the humanity which diſtinguiſhes our age, is often only retarded by an ignorance of it's neceſſities; to perceive and pathetically to deſcribe theſe neceſſities, is reſerved for the ſenſitive philoſopher. It is the characteriſtic of a man of genius, in ſuch appeals to our boſoms, that his glowing mind pours forth thoſe fervid expreſſions,

preſſions, that agitation of ideas, thoſe pictures of truth, which communicate his own ſenſations, and animate with his exquiſite ſoul, the ſouls of others. The people are a vaſt body, and men of genius are the eyes and hands.

The thouſand public utilities, I ſpeak not of the elegancies, derived from the multifarious diviſions of ſcience and of art, can alone be perfected by THE PHILOSOPHICAL GENIUS. Truth is a certain point in knowledge; ages ſucceed ages; and that point is paſſed, or not attained; a philoſophical genius ariſes, ſeiſes and fixes it in the vaſt expanſe of nature, ſecured by it's own weight from the mobility of time. A Newton and a Locke accompliſh that in which an Ariſtotle and a Deſcartes failed. But theſe truths, which form ſo many epochs in the human underſtanding, are covered in the ſublime obſcurity of nature; how is the veil to be lifted from Iſis? A painful meditation alone elaborates them into exiſtence. In the arts, important diſcoveries are obtained by accident; but the precious idea, which depends on a long train of reaſoning, can never be formed by chance. Philoſophers muſt meditate; and too often their meditations are purſued at the coſt of their felicity.

Yet let us not confound true PHILOSOPHERS with dreaming THEORISTS. They are not more engaged in cultivating the mind, than the earth; the annals of agriculture are as valuable as the annals of hiſtory; and while they inſtruct ſome to think, they teach others to labour. PHILOSOPHY extends it's thoughts on whatever the eye has ſeen, or the hand has touched; it herbaliſes in fields; it ſounds mines; it is on the waters, and in the foreſts; it is in the library, and the laboratory; it arranges the calculations of finance; it invents the police of a city; it erects it's fortifications; it gives velocity to our fleets; in a word, it is alike in the ſolitude of deſerts, as in the populouſneſs of manufactories. The Genius of Philosophy pierces every where, and on whatever it reſts, like the ſun, it diſcovers what lay concealed, or matures what it found imperfect.

CHAP. XV.

On an Academy of polite Literature, Penſions, and Prizes.

TO deliver any novel obſervations on an academy for the belles lettres is difficult; but it is more difficult to paſs ſuch an object in ſilent regret.

The munificent hand of majeſty has raiſed an inſtitution to the mimetic art of painting; and this is a legitimate claim, which a prince, the commencement of whoſe reign was adorned by an honourable love of the arts, has to the eſtimation of poſterity. But why polite literature, which forms the delight and the ſolace of a greater portion of the nation than this art, ſhould have received no ſuch diſtinguiſhed approbation from the Brunſwicks, is not to the philoſopher,

perhaps,

perhaps, ſo much an object of ſurpriſe as of ſorrow.*

I begin theſe obſervations with a literal tranſcription of the opening of Sir Joſhua Reynolds's firſt diſcourſe. The Preſident ſays, "it is indeed difficult to "give any other reaſon why an empire, "like that of Britain, ſhould ſo long "have wanted an ornament ſo ſuitable "to it's greatneſs, than that ſlow pro-"greſſion of things, which naturally "makes elegance and refinement the laſt "effect of opulence and power."—Of opulence and power, have the higher claſſes of our nation a deficient meaſure? I doubt, indeed, if they really poſſeſs, as a body, or elegance or refinement. The philoſopher is not dazzled by elegance and refinement in manners; he does not confound the brilliancy of equipages with the energies of the mind. To his contemplative eye it is poſſible that an opulent and ſplendid nation may be barbarous and groſs; as we obſerve in the individual, who, adorned by the inſignia of honour, and loaded with incalculable wealth, may at the ſame time have all the barbarity of mind which marks and degrades the loweſt of the populace. Should the greater part of the nobility of any country be more partial to pugiliſts and jockies, than to artiſts and philoſophers, the hiſtorian would be juſtified in recording that the genius of it's nobility was barbarous and groſs. It is almoſt peculiar to literature, that whenever it's profeſſors feel themſelves contemned or neglected, to vindicate their cauſe, they have only to record this contempt and this neglect.

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* It muſt not be forgotten that ſeveral authors have received penſions; Dr. Henry, Dr. Johnſon, and at preſent Mr. Cowper the poet, have been honoured by his Majeſty's attentions. But ſuch ſolitary rewards are like fountains in the burning deſerts of Arabia. One of his Majeſty's moſt illuſtrious actions is his converſation with Dr. Johnſon, in which an amiable and reflecting mind adds to the dignity of the Monarch. George II. remonſtrated with Lord Hervey for writing verſes, which he obſerved might be proper in Mr. Pope, or thoſe who lived by the *buſineſs*, but very unbecoming a *Lord*.

I would aſk why the art of writing is not deſerving of the ſame regard as the art of painting? And then I would enquire, what painting can urge in it's own cauſe, which will entitle it to a ſuperiority over the art of compoſition?

But it may be urged that an inſtitution of this kind, while it has been recommended by ſome, has been oppoſed by others. Perhaps, in our country, it has never been examined with the attention ſuch an object claims; often it's defects have been rendered prominent, and it's benefits omitted; it's inabilities have been diſplayed, and it's powers have been concealed; it has often been regarded as a common place for ridicule, not as a diſcuſſion for reaſon.

Johnſon, in his Life of Swift, has given ſome plauſible arguments againſt the academy which Swift propoſed; the arguments of this great man, more ſpecious than juſt, relate not to our preſent ſubject; for the academy Swift was deſirous of eſtabliſhing, was merely an imitation of the French academy; for the poliſhing, refining, and embelliſhing the language. The Engliſh language now wants no academy for it's improvements; it has few acquiſitions to make, but much to preſerve.

A literary inſtitution might be formed, in which the errors of former academies might be obviated, and the advanced genius of our times might add it's own valuable inventions. To improve the paſt is not difficult; but whether ſuch an academy would be a national utility, is an important queſtion, not, perhaps, difficult to reſolve.

There is one kind of men, to whom no ſtudent would addreſs himſelf on ſubjects of ſcience and taſte. At the ſiege of Athens, the barbarous Sylla commanded the ſhady walks of the ACADEMY (that reſort of the Muſes which has left it's name to all future literary ſocieties) to be torn up, and the hallowed trees to be converted into martial machines. I addreſs myſelf not to the living Syllas, who are as inimical to a modern, as their ferocious model was to the firſt academy. The *Omars* of literature (the expreſſion be pardoned) we know are the enemies of the *Homers*.

On the firſt glance we take of the ſubject, the French academy, properly ſo diſtinguiſhed, preſents itſelf. It's labours have not been great; becauſe it's object was limited to the cultivation of the language. But it obtained it's object with all it's poſſible accompliſhment.

I trace the hiſtory of French ſtyle, in the harangues of this academy. The firſt are cold, dry, and full of thoſe common turns of expreſſion, which were doubtleſs conſidered as the *curioſa felicitas*, but which, by their reiterated appearance, ſhew the barrenneſs of their diction, and the paucity of happy expreſſions. The language was not yet formed; and the academy had commenced with nearly an empty treaſury. About the middle volumes, eloquence occaſionally appears, an acceſſion of new turns enrich the harangues, and if the ſtyle is not yet ſplendid, it is not devoid of grace. The concluding volumes wear a brilliant appearance; a warmth of colouring, a boldneſs of expreſſion, and all the ſeduction of animated eloquence. If theſe volumes owe ſomething to happier topics, it is neceſſary to obſerve, that ſome ſubjects not leſs intereſting, in the early volumes, have all the deficiencies of ſtyle.

Some will urge that an author can himſelf perform better than a ſociety, and the dictionaries of Furetiere and Johnſon, may be quoted as having been performed without the aid of an academy.

I would not deny that one ſuperior genius is capable of obtaining what forty inferior ones can never accompliſh; and I even add, that one great author can perform better than forty great authors. No celebrated work has yet been compoſed by the united talents of ſeveral; but many great men have conjoined their abilities in vain, in various works.

The mechanical operation of compiling a dictionary, however, I believe, may be better effected by a ſociety, than by an individual. The dictionary of Johnſon, though perhaps it could not be more finely executed, might have been conſiderably augmented by a ſociety.

Does not this great man himſelf, hoſtile as he appears to academies, inconſciouſly acknowledge their utility, by complaining that his labour was not formed under "the ſhelter of academic bowers."

It appears to me, that the happieſt effect is obtained when an academy and an individual unite their powers. I explain myſelf by the following circumſtance.

D'Alembert, in his Eloge of the Abbè Deſmarais, obſerves, that the long articles of the French dictionary were written by him, and that the public conſidered them as more finiſhed, and more ſatisfactory than the ſhort ones. D'Alembert gives the reaſon. He obſerves, that "the brevity of articles of little extent, "allowed of their being the work of the "whole ſociety; and that a ſociety col-"lected in a body, diſturbed in it's de-"ciſions by twenty different opinions, "which croſs and deſtroy one another, "muſt with difficulty attain to ſatisfy it- "ſelf and it's readers; but, on the con- "trary, the great articles, indiſpenſably "given to the care of an individual, ac- "quire, in paſſing through his hands, "all the perfection which the ſelf-love of "the writer can give, animated alſo by "the academical fervour."

This judicious reflection of one of the moſt judicious writers of France, may ſerve to prove that a work is beſt performed by an individual; but that an individual, while he labours under the eye of a ſociety, feels a ſtimulative in that ſociety, which otherwiſe had been wanting.

And this is the great end and utility of ſuch an inſtitution. It's various advantages are, perhaps, ſufficiently obvious; but the vaſt influence it has over writers, has not, perhaps, been ſufficiently remarked.

marked. It animates not only the individuals of the ſociety, but every individual who aſpires to become a member of the ſociety, and to wear, as Voltaire ſaid, the blue ribband of literature. By a diſtribution of prizes, it diffuſes an emulation to the remoteſt parts of the kingdom, and introduces to the public thoſe ingenuous youths, whom their ſituation conceals from the world. By it's own memoirs, written by the members, it forms the moſt valuable literary repoſitories in a nation. To reflect on theſe advantages may not be uſeleſs.

Some of the inferior benefits attending ſuch an inſtitution, are indiſputable. In theſe literary conferences, the taſte of every aſſociate would become more brilliant, because it would continually receive the attrition and contact, it is to be ſuppoſed, of the fineſt underſtandings in the nation.* In caſes of emergency, recourſe would be had to the academy, and a Robertſon would not ſtand in ſuch need, as we have ſeen, of the advice of an inferior mind. The paradoxes in poetry of a Johnſon, would have been oppoſed before their publication, or at leaſt, the work muſt have iſſued into the world

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* The following obſervations on *Academies*, cited by Goujet in his Bibliotheque Francoiſe, vol. 2. p. 453, are from one of the numerous political works of the Abbè de Saint Pierre. They are too ingenious to be paſſed in ſilence. He ſays, "what ſupplies among men the method of univerſities, is the method of academies, or conferences which are held on matters of their profeſſion, or their taſte. They do not hear a profeſſor, or a regent, but they hear one another. They hear, with greater attention, thoſe who have acquired greater reputation in the company; they improve by a reciprocation of obſervations; they contradict their equals, and they are contradicted; and the authority of ſome, the contradiction of others, the dread of contempt or ridicule, the deſire of applauſe, and of ſurpaſſing their equals; the wiſh of being uſeful to our country, animate all in their labour, and augment their application and attention, from which ariſes the growth and extenſion of mind."

without the ſanction of the academy, which would have been a tacit cenſure. The ſociety ſhould be provided with aſſociates in the various claſſes of literature; it ſhould have it's grammarians, it's hiſtorians, and it's metaphyſicians, as well as it's poets, it's orators, and it's philoſophers. In this hive of literary bees, no indolent member ſhould remain a member; all muſt be animation, all muſt be labour. And that no excuſe may be framed of neglect to the cauſe of literature, penſions ſhould be given to thoſe who may ſtand in want of them; for penſions to all will not be wanted, ſince ſome will labour for glory, though ſome may alſo want bread.

But even LITERARY PENSIONS have been ridiculed; and it is not unneceſſary to offer ſome reflections on them.

There are two opinions relative to the ſtate of men of genius. One party imagine that no protection from the great, or a court, is neceſſary for the encouragement of artiſts; and the other are perſuaded, that when honours and penſions are judiciouſly diſtributed, it excites emulation in the young, and gives that leiſure to thoſe on whom they are beſtowed, ſo neceſſary to ſome, to cultivate their talents. They think with Boileau, that

> "Un AUGUSTE aiſement peut faire des VIRGILES."

Lord Orford, honourably known under the name of Horace Walpole (a name that preſents to the mind, taſte, fancy, and learning) has ſaid in his preface to his Anecdotes of Painting, "want of "protection is the apology for want of "genius. Milton and Fontaine did not "write in the baſk of court favour. A "poet or a painter may want an equi-"page, or a Villa, by wanting protection:

"they can always afford to buy ink and "paper, colours and pencil. Mr. Hogarth has received no honours, but "univerſal admiration."

I reply to his Lordſhip, that it is true the favour of a court knighted Blackmore, and penſioned Quarles; and both were miſerable poets; but if a court cannot convert dull men into men of genius, it may preſerve men of genius from becoming dull men. It might have afforded Dryden that ſtudious leiſure which he ever wanted, and which has given us imperfect tragedies, and incorrect poems, in lieu of finiſhed compoſitions, and the regular flights of a noble genius. It might have animated a Gainſborough to form an Engliſh ſchool in landſcape, which it is ſaid was his favourite, but neglected purſuit. As for the equipage and villa of the poet or the painter, theſe they leave to the idle connoiſſeur and the vain actor. Nor muſt we conſent to the inſulting obſervation that they may always buy ink and paper, colours and pencils. Is it ſufficient for a delicate and ſenſitive mind to have ſuch implements to awaken the brilliancy of imagination? Is the picture uncommon to ſee a great genius with his pens or his pencils on the table, leaning over them in that ſecret agony of ſpirit, which murders fancy, and ſpreads a torpor on the ſoul? Had Chatterton been protected, not with an equipage or a villa, but with a penſion, the youth had not periſhed; but this unhappy poet inſtructs us, that pens and paper are not the only requiſites to cheriſh genius.

On the other ſide, ſo different are the opinions of even men of letters on this ſubject, the French writers (and the greateſt of them received their penſions without any injury to their genius) continually point to England as a model of literary protection. They tell us that Addiſon was Secretary of State; Newton and Locke, Commiſſioners; Swift almoſt Prime Miniſter; and Prior an Ambaſſador.

If it is urged that the public are the beſt patrons, and that ſeveral popular authors have left fervid expreſſions as memorials of their gratitude; I reply, that the public are more munificent patrons than princes, provided that the genius of an author happens to take a popular turn. But of authors, few can be popular; for moſt of the departments in literature require the ſtudy of many years, and cannot be perfected till a late period. Such are all the exact ſciences, and every ſpecies of erudition. The hiſtorian and the noveliſt may gratify the public taſte, but what is to become of the antiquary and the mathematician?

It is one certain evil, conſequent to the want of patronage, that a writer of great genius, when he diſcovers that he has nothing but his talents, and that the public attention muſt be rouſed by ſome extravagant novelty, will conſult the worſt diſpoſitions of the public; becauſe theſe are the moſt univerſal; and inſtead of compoſing a beautiful poem, he will write a dreadful ſatire; inſtead of a hiſtory, a libel; and inſtead of a moral romance, ſome ſcandalous memoirs.

Men of genius, penſioned by a court, will be enabled to indulge their own manner, though it might not immediately be popular. He who writes in the proper repoſe of mind, and with regularity of application, will give his own natural phyſiognomy, and not that artificial countenance which thoſe who court the mob are obliged to aſſume.

If I am told, that to accept penſions is not congenial to the free ſpirit of a Briton, I reply, that literary penſions, unlike others, are honourable to the donor, and the penſioner. There is ſurely leſs ſervility in receiving a gratuitous gift from an enlightened monarch, than the wages of an inhuman bookſeller.

There is, I think, a reward for literature, of ſtill greater utility than even penſions.

The diſtribution of PRIZES appears of greater utility than PENSIONS. A penſion preſerves one man of letters, but a prize may give birth to many. He who muſt ſatisfy a judge, and ſurpaſs a rival, will not ſatisfy himſelf till he has ſurpaſſed himſelf; he will not try merely to give a good work, but the beſt; and the vigilance of ambition will ſometimes ſupply the deficiencies of genius. If he is not yet crowned with the ſplendid reward, he may merit the animation of an honourable notice; if he cannot obtain a triumph, an ovation may be reſerved for him.* Uſeful topics, which might not have been attempted by an individual, are diſperſed about the nation. We have ſeen lately, a prize in the Iriſh academy produce a valuable "Eſſay on the "beſt means of providing for the Poor." Subjects of national importance are not attempted becauſe a vender of literature may not chuſe to undertake them; a prize would beſtow honour and aſſiſtance on the ingenious ſpeculator. It is by her prizes, as well as by her academies, that France has always preceded us, and that her ingenuity is made to ſurpaſs our genius.†

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* An *ovation*, among the Romans, was a *leſſer triumph.* At an ovation, the General entered the city on foot or on horſeback; but in a triumph he rode in a chariot.

† When the imperfect ſailing of our marine was diſcu[illegible]d, January 6, in this year, Admiral Gardner alledged

While this academy for polite literature would be thus effecting a great national utility, their own memoirs would be invaluable. The Academy of the Belles Lettres in France, has formed a collection of hiſtorical, critical, literary, and miſcellaneous information, unequalled in any nation. Our moſt accompliſhed hiſtorians cite them as their

ledged the following reaſon for the ſuperiority of the French in this particular. He ſaid, “to his knowledge the French ſhips ſailed better than the Engliſh, owing to their different conſtruction. Whenever a ſhip was to be built in France, PREMIUMS were offered for the beſt plan; the ſeveral plans were then referred to an ACADEMY of Sciences, and the moſt perfect always adopted. He entertained no doubt, but if PREMIUMS were held out here, for good models, our ſhips would be much better.”—Here we obſerve, that an *Admiral*, on the ſubject of *Marine*, acknowledges the utility of PRIZES and ACADEMIES; and we preſume, that not one enlightened artiſt but would employ the ſame language reſpecting his own art. By witholding theſe encouragements, many ingenious artiſts have periſhed with grief, and many have renounced their country, and enriched foreigners with thoſe improvements their ungrateful nation denied even their notice.

authorities. The learning of a learned age is rendered inſtructive; and what becomes dull and inſipid in a Salmaſius and a Scaliger, delight with thoſe who do not think knowledge conſiſts in the heavy and unprofitable ſcience of dates, unconnected facts, and titles of books; but in reflection and in taſte. Knowledge is only knowledge when it is rendered acceſſible to the nation; it muſt be ſhewn to, and handled by the multitude, and not preſerved like an uſeleſs piece of antiquity in the collections of the curious.

France had literary ſocieties of every kind; her provincial academies were numerous; and I cannot but attribute her ſuperiority in a fine and brilliant eloquence; a language of criticiſm that analyſes and paints our ſenſations; and their ſeductive art of compoſition to theſe lettered confraternities. Her religion was friendly to retirement; and the retirement of ſtudious men is rarely a barren leiſure, and a proud indolence. It is a juſtice we owe to letters, and to an extinct order of men, to acknowledge the invaluable labours of many monaſtic ſocieties of modern times. To the Port Royal the European youth were long indebted for the initiatory books of learning, and for verſions of the ancients, not yet neglected. To the learned Benedictines we owe their extenſive "Literary Hiſtory "of France," which, though carried to 13 volumes in 4to. reaches only to the 12th century. Many, not leſs intereſting, nor vaſt, might be mentioned. Labours like theſe, can never be ſatisfactorily performed by any individual; One, may be permitted to devote himſelf to the compoſition of the work, but many hands and many eyes muſt collect the materials, and muſt watch over the execution. We have no ſuch Literary Hiſtory of England;

land; and I may venture to predict we never can, if an academy of polite literature is not inſtituted.

There remains one obſervation to be made on the beneficial effect of literary ſocieties diſperſed in the kingdom. Wherever ſuch exiſt, there will never appear in the vicinage a youth of genius, but the members will perceive his abilities, and will receive him or as a parent, or as a friend. A conſiderable number of the illuſtrious literati of France, were firſt induced to devote themſelves to ſtudy by the penetration of their ſuperiors, or having found an aſylum in ſome monaſtery, indulged their prevailing diſpoſition.

The inſtitution of literary ſocieties is ſo much deſired, and the want is ſo urgent, that the diſcernment of individuals has of late attempted to ſupply this diſhonourable deficiency by aſſociations in the metropolis, as well as in ſome of our provincial towns. The Mancheſter ſociety has merited the approbation of the public.*

But we cannot reaſonably expect that a private ſociety will ever anſwer the ideas of the public, and become of national utility. De Foe, in his "Eſſay "on Projects, (who projected millions for the nation, but was generally confined for his own debts) gives ſome obſervations reſpecting the inſtitution of an academy for polite literature, but he chiefly regards it in the view of refining and adjuſting the language. He ſays, p. 229, that he was once a member of a ſociety who attempted this noble deſign, but it's failure he attributes to the greatneſs of the work and the modeſty of the gentlemen; and concludes by ſaying that we want a Richelieu to commence ſuch a work. I believe it was not the modeſty of the members, nor the greatneſs of the work, which occaſioned it's failure; but many other reaſons, which will always operate againſt private literary ſocieties.

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* I have the pleaſure of announcing a volume of Miſcellanies in the preſs, by a LITERARY SOCIETY eſtabliſhed at EXETER. It is their firſt fruits.

A ſociety of friends find no great difficulty to be pleaſed with the compoſitions of each other; many will be admitted to ſuch a ſociety, more out of affection, than for their ability. It is the great requiſite of an academy, that all the members ſhould be profeſſed ſtudents, whoſe SOLE OCCUPATION is literature, and whoſe life is devoted to academical functions. If PENSIONS and PRIZES are added to the eſtabliſhment, we have then as perfect an ACADEMY, perhaps, as poſſibly can exiſt.

This grand and deſirable object can alone be obtained, as ſuch hitherto have been obtained, by the ſanction of the Sovereign, and the applauſe of the People. Such an inſtitution would not alone be a national ornament; for to hold out rewards to genius, and to diffuſe among the people the humaniſing and peaceful purſuits of literature, has never yet been conſidered by politicians as a vain and an unimportant purpoſe.

Such is the wonderful influence of a love of letters in a nation, that it has often diſguiſed the deformity of deſpotiſm, and rendered even a nation of ſlaves, a poliſhed, a refined, and a happy people.

At the preſent melancholy moment, when Europe appears hoſtile to Reaſon, and to Humanity, let us indulge the hope, that this inſtitution may become the ornament of Peace—of a Peace, that by it's duration may reſemble the viſion of an admirable philanthropiſt and a poor politician, the viſion of the Abbé de Saint Pierre,—AN UNIVERSAL PEACE. When the principle of Government is VIRTUE, the action of that Government will be PEACE; Governments are, however, always in war.

SONNET

SONNET FROM METASTASIO.

Scrivendo l' Autore in Vienna l'anno 1733 la Sua Olimpiade, ſi ſentì Commoſſo fino alle lagrime nell' eſprimere la diviſione di due teneri amici: e meravigliandoſi che un falſo, e da lui inventato diſaſtro poteſſe cagionargli una ſi vera paſſione, ſi fece a riflettere quanto poco ragionevole e ſolido fondamento poſſano aver le altre che ſoglion frequentamente agitarci nel corſo di noſtra vita.

SOGNI, e favole io fingo; e pure in Carte
Mentre favole, e ſogni orno, e diſegno,
In lor, folle ch'io Son, prendon tal parte
Che del mal che inventai piango e mi Sdegno.
Maforſe, allor che non m'inganna l'arte,
Più Saggio io Sono? El' agitato ingegno
Forſe allor più tranquillo? O forſe parte
Da più Salda cagion l'amor, lo Sdegno?
Ah che non ſol quelle, ch'io canto, o ſcrivo
Favole Son; ma quanto temo, o ſpero,
Tutto è menzogna, e delirando io vivo!
Sogno della mia vita è il Corſo intero.
Deh tu, Signor, quando a deſtarmi arrivo
Fa ch'io trovi ripoſo in Sen del VERO.

In 1733, the Author compoſing his Olympiad, felt himſelf ſuddenly moved, even to tears, in expreſſing the ſeparation of two tender Lovers. Surpriſed that a fictitious grief, invented too by himſelf, could raiſe ſo true a paſſion, he reflected how little reaſonable and ſolid a foundation the others had, which ſo frequently agitated us in this ſtate of our exiſtence.

SONNET.—IMITATED.

FABLES and dreams I feign; yet though but verſe
The dreams and fables, I adorn and call;
Fool that I am!—I grieve as I rehearſe;
And GENUINE TEARS, for FANCIED SORROWS fall.
Pephaps the dear deluſion of my art
Is wiſdom; and the agitated mind,
As ſtill reſponding to each plaintive part,
With love and ſcorn, a tranquil hour can find.
Ah! not alone the tender RHIMES I give,
Are fictions; but my FEARS and HOPES I deem
Are FABLES all—deliriouſly I live—
And life's whole courſe is one protracted dream.
Eternal power! when ſhall I wake to reſt
This wearied brain on TRUTH's immortal breaſt?

FINIS.

ADVERTISEMENT.

I TAKE this opportunity of declaring, that having been repeatedly attacked in the moſt illiberal manner by WILLIAM GRAHAM, *reſpecting an Anecdote of* MRS. MACAULEY's *mutilation of a Harleian MS. that no juſt reaſon has yet been aſſigned to afford me the pleaſure of retracting this accuſation againſt a Lady of her eminent talents.*

At preſent, the myſterious note of DR. MORTON *remains unexplained, yet if it is allowed to have any meaning, it muſt convey a charge againſt the Hiſtorian, and as ſuch will no doubt be received by impartial poſterity.*

This, however, I concede, that I cannot prove this circumſtance, for I was not born when it took place. It reſts not upon the floating reports of thirty years, but in the circumſtantial evidence of the Note which has been inſerted in it's unmutilated *ſtate, in ſeveral literary journals. I ſay unmutilated, for* Mr. G. *had the ingenuity to give it only in the ſtate which was moſt adapted to his purpoſe.*

I was induced to notice this ſingular occurrence, not by deſign, but by accident; with no other view than that of literary inſtruction, and for no other party than that of truth.

I. D'ISRAELI.

February 25, 1795.

WHERE MAY BE HAD,

By the AUTHOR,

A DISSERTATION on ANECDOTES.

CONTENTS.

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